

# **French ambassador seeks to deepen economic cooperation with T&T**





France's Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago Guillaume Pierre PHOTO BY VASHTI SINGH



France's Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago, Guillaume Pierre, has outlined an ambitious agenda to expand French investment in this country, with energy, infrastructure, logistics, and advanced technology at the centre of the bilateral relationship.

In an interview with the Business Guardian, Pierre pointed to the strength of existing French commercial involvement, particularly in the energy sector, while signalling a clear interest in positioning T&T for the next phase of global energy transformation.

A cornerstone of that relationship is Perenco, which he described as the second-largest oil and gas producer in the country and a company seeking to grow its footprint.

"They already do a lot. They want to do more," he said, noting that Perenco remains a significant economic partner with expansion plans under consideration.

He indicated that additional French energy providers are monitoring



developments locally, particularly in a period of geopolitical change across the region. Investor appetite exists, but clarity and stability remain critical factors.

“What companies like is predictability,” he said, adding that part of his function is to provide accurate information and facilitate connections between French firms and local decision-makers.

At the same time, he framed the future of the partnership as extending beyond hydrocarbons.

A developing hydrogen initiative involving Trinidadian Philip Julien founder of Kenesjay Green Ltd (KGL) and French renewable energy firm Hydrogène de France (HDF Energy) represents what he described as long-term strategic thinking.

The proposed hydrogen plant, he said, focuses on green energy solutions and reflects the accelerating global demand for cleaner fuels. Pierre argued that while oil and gas will remain essential to T&T's economy, a parallel investment in renewables is necessary to sustain energy leadership over the coming decades.

“If Trinidad wants to remain an energy powerhouse after being so for 100 years as a big oil and gas-producing country, I think Trinidad has to look at renewables,” he said.

He pointed to mounting international regulatory pressure and structural shifts in global markets favouring lower-carbon energy.

Countries that fail to diversify their energy base risk declining competitiveness over time, he added, especially as gas prices fluctuate and the era of abundant, inexpensive hydrocarbons fades.

For this country, the transition will require regulatory adjustments and a recalibration of long-standing assumptions about the energy economy. However, he maintained that early positioning in green technologies could preserve the country's relevance as a regional energy hub.

Infrastructure, logistics and diversification

French involvement in T&T extends well beyond oil and gas.

Pierre highlighted a history of major infrastructure projects undertaken by French firms, underscoring what he described as a long-standing economic partnership.

Bouygues Bâtiment constructed the Port of Spain waterfront, while Vinci was involved in key highway works, including the north-south interconnection. French companies also contributed to the development of the Brian Lara Cricket Academy in Tarouba.

In maritime logistics, CMA CGM handles approximately half of the container traffic through T&T, reinforcing the country's role as a regional transshipment and logistics hub.

Pierre identified urban services and utilities as further areas of opportunity.

Veolia Environnement SA is currently engaged in water management programmes with WASA, reflecting France's global expertise in waste treatment, sewage systems and integrated city management solutions.

Security cooperation is another pillar of engagement. Thales, a leader in radar, anti-drone systems and surveillance technologies, represents potential collaboration in border protection and maritime security. France maintains six naval vessels based in Martinique that patrol Caribbean waters, a presence Pierre linked directly to regional crime and trafficking challenges.

Transport and aviation have now been formally added to France's priority list.

Last week, Pierre met with Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation, Eli Zakour and the Ministry's Permanent Secretary, Nicolette Duke, to discuss expanding cooperation in the transport and aviation sectors.

The meeting focused on positioning transport and aviation as drivers of economic growth, productivity and national efficiency.

Minister Zakour reaffirmed his commitment to continued engagement with the French Ambassador to strengthen bilateral relations and explore strategic initiatives aligned with T&T's transport and aviation development agenda.

The Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation has stated that it is advancing strategic international partnerships aimed at fostering innovation,

improving operational efficiency and supporting sustainable growth across the country's transport and aviation systems.

Pierre noted that France possesses global leadership in aviation manufacturing, air traffic control systems helicopter services, airport management, and related technologies, creating potential alignment with T&T's sectoral priorities.

France, with approximately one million citizens in its Caribbean territories and permanent membership on the UN Security Council, views regional stability as a matter of national interest.

Trafficking in drugs, weapons, and people affects French territories directly, creating space for closer cooperation with Caribbean states.

Trade volumes between France and T&T remain modest relative to potential, with hydrocarbons dominating exchanges. Pierre argued that diversification is in the interest of both countries.

He referenced the concept of "de-risking", particularly in relation to food imports. A heavy reliance on a single supply channel, he noted, creates vulnerability to price spikes or disruption.

France and Europe could serve as balancing suppliers, especially in high-quality agricultural goods and agri-technology.

France is Europe's largest agricultural producer, and Pierre suggested T&T has the scale and capability to strengthen its own agricultural output within the Caribbean context, particularly if regional food production initiatives are revitalised.

### Education, roots and cultural capital

Beyond commerce and security, Pierre has prioritised academic and knowledge partnerships. He recently engaged with officials at The University of the West Indies, St Augustine, to explore expanded student exchanges, joint research initiatives, and collaboration between French companies and local faculties.

A "French Day" is scheduled at UWI's St Augustine campus on March 26, featuring thematic workshops in areas such as engineering and computer science, alongside discussions on research funding and student mobility.

France is seeking to increase the number of Caribbean students studying in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and mainland French universities, viewing intellectual exchange as a foundation for longterm cooperation.

Pierre's connection to T&T is also personal. Although this is his first ambassadorial posting, he lived in the country for two years as a child and attended Holy Name Prep School.

Over subsequent decades, he maintained ties to the wider Caribbean, including professional assignments in Haiti following the 2011 earthquake and regular engagement with France's regional territories.

He presented his credentials in early October and described his initial months as productive, citing strong engagement with President Christine Kangaloo, Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and several Cabinet ministers.

While economic diplomacy forms the core of his mandate, Pierre also reflected on Carnival as a defining national asset. He characterised it as an expression of this country's creativity and social cohesion, a period when differences recede and collective identity takes centre stage.

Carnival, he observed, has evolved into a global entertainment industry, with Trinidad-inspired festivals in Toronto, London and New York generating employment and export earnings.

For him, it stands alongside oil, gas and manufacturing as pillars of national strength.

His diplomatic focus remains on expanding tangible economic cooperation, particularly in energy transition, infrastructure modernisation, and technology-driven growth.

With French companies actively assessing opportunities and new delegations from Martinique and Guadeloupe expected in the coming weeks, the next phase of engagement will hinge on converting interest into sustained investment.