

Energy sector optimistic about 2026



Touchstone Exploration's Paul Baay responds to members of the media at the opening of the Energy Conference at the Hyatt Regency, Port-of-Spain, yesterday. PHOTO BY ABRAHAM DIAZ

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Positive momentum is building in the local energy sector in 2026, driven by growing expectations as more oil and gas projects are scheduled to come on stream this year and next year.

Chair of the Energy Chamber of T&T, Mala Baliraj, highlighted many of these projects in her opening address at the 2026 T&T Energy Conference at the Hyatt Regency in Port-of-Spain yesterday.

"We have seen some projects being completed and moving to begin production, notably the bpTT Cypre project and the EOG/ bpTT joint venture Mento project.

Trinidad's first grid-scale renewables project, the Brechin Castle solar farm, also began producing green electrons in 2025," said Baliraj in her address.

“These projects join others already in execution and working towards first production. These include the EOG/bpTT Coconut project, which is in execution with the platform being constructed in the TOFCO yard. And bpTT’s fourth subsea project, Ginger, is also on schedule to deliver first gas in 2027.

“The biggest project in execution is the Shell Manatee, set to come onstream at the end of 2027.

By all reports, execution of these major projects are all proceeding as planned: important news for the downstream gas industry.”

Baliraj said the industry had been buoyed by the Government’s work to speed up necessary approvals to allow work on these projects, which was also a positive indicator.

She added, “Getting investment decisions made on these and other upstream projects remains the most important element to secure the future of Trinidad’s energy sector. In recent months, we have seen the Minister of Energy place a firm focus on accelerating approvals in the energy sector, culminating in the welcome news of the Cabinet’s decision to establish an oversight committee, the Energy Accelerator Hub.

“It is heartening to see a focus placed on this area, and it aligns with our advocacy position over the years. The Energy Chamber remains fully committed to working with the Government on that process.”

Baliraj stated, however, that there were other steps that could improve energy returns further.

“In addition to accelerating the approvals process, other changes could help investment decisions be made for some of the discovered but undeveloped fields. Fiscal reform remains an essential element for some fields, especially small and marginal gas fields where a tiered approach may be required. These are policy decisions within Trinidad and Tobago’s control, and we look forward to productive dialogue on these with the relevant stakeholders,” Baliraj said.

Touchstone Exploration’s Paul Baay agreed that the sector is in a good place, as he explained that the ministry’s acceleration of approvals had brought up the date of potential returns from the company’s recent drilling of onshore

wells at Central Block.

“I think the key thing there is, because we’re onshore, some of our projects can get turned around quicker, like we can physically drill a well and get it in production much quicker than some of these big offshore ones. So the new Government is recognising that and helped us with approvals, like certificates for environmental compliance,” Baay said.

“We drilled the first well. We want to drill a second well really quickly. That process, you know, used to be a nine-month process, and it’s been shrunk down. Now it looks like it’s going to be literally a couple of weeks, maybe a month.”

Baay added that the company could see some returns from that activity by the end of next month.

“We drilled the first well in December at the central block, and that’s going to come on at the end of February. So you know that’s like, we’re not talking quarters here. We’re talking months and weeks from when we can drill a well to when we get it on production,” he said.

Baay said, “Those are the kind of reaction times that I think the new Government is recognising and putting in place the necessary things that we see. So from our point of view, that saves us money and saves us time. From the Government’s point of view, that gets molecules on quicker for all of those suppliers that need them.”