

**SPEECH BY THE HON. PRIME MINISTER  
KAMILA PERSAD-BISSESSAR  
OPENING OF NGC COVE ESTATE GAS RECEIVING FACILITY  
MONDAY JANUARY 14 2013**

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Salutations

- The Minister of Energy and Energy Affairs, Senator Kevin Ramnarine
- The Chief Secretary of the THA, Orville London
- Minority Leader of the THA, Ashworth Jack
- Chairman of the NGC, Roop Chan Chadeesingh
- Members of the Board of the NGC
- President of the NGC, Indar Maharaj
- Members of the Media
- Distinguished ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure to address you today as we formally open the Cove Estate Gas Receiving Facility. This is a historic event as it marks a new chapter in the economic development of Tobago. The facility we are opening here today connects Tobago to the country's natural gas grid. From today, Tobago is no longer a spectator in the national energy sector but an active participant. This is in keeping with the vision of the Government that Tobago as it directly benefits from the presence and exploitation of the country's natural gas resources. A Tobago representative is on the NGC, NP and I am told the Petrotrin Boards.

This facility receives natural gas from BHP Billiton's Angostura field and if need be there is the flexibility to receive gas from the wider national natural gas supply grid. The facility is therefore significant from the point of view of energy security for Tobago as well as being a facilitator of economic development for the island.

The facility is connected to the national natural gas grid by a 12 inch pipeline that is 54 kilometers in length and runs in waters depths ranging from 24 meters to 92 meters. I am advised that the shore approach for the pipeline was implemented using horizontal directional drilling which was done to preserve the environmental integrity of the coastline in this area. With the addition of these 54 kilometers, the NGC now manages 1000 kilometers of pipeline in both Trinidad and Tobago. This is a significant achievement for a company that is 100% owned by the people of Trinidad and Tobago and run by the people of Trinidad and Tobago.

This gas receiving facility also boasts of a ground flare, the first of its kind in the country. There is, therefore, no visible or open flame and no smoke emanating from the flare. This feature is consistent with the need to always preserve Tobago's natural beauty. At every stage the NGC has taken steps to ensure that the integrity of the environment is preserved.

The natural gas that will be processed at this facility will be fed to the neighboring Cove Estate TTEC power plant. This power plant is a dual fuel power plant meaning that it can run on both diesel and natural gas. At present the power plant is running on diesel. This is an expense to TTEC as diesel has to be shipped to Tobago from Trinidad. However, it is shortly expected that TTEC will commission the power plant for the use of natural gas. When this happens, Trinidad and Tobago will be generating all its electricity using natural gas. This places Trinidad and Tobago in an almost unique position where we will be generating all our electricity using clean burning natural gas. The only other country in the world that does this is Qatar.

This facility will also facilitate new business development in Cove Estate for companies that wish to use natural gas as an input. While the pipeline and the gas receiving facility will initially handle about 12 million cubic feet of gas per day for power generation, they have both been designed to so they can handle a significantly increased volume of natural gas. This is an important design feature as it will facilitate any increase in demand for natural gas such as the Eastern Caribbean Gas Pipeline. You will recall we have signed off with the government of Barbados for the supply of natural gas.

As we move forward, we are keenly aware that exploration and development work will be taking place in the waters around Tobago – namely in Block 22 which is operated by Centrica, in NCMA 4 which is again operated by Centrica and in Block 23(a) and Block 14 both operated by BP.

Discoveries of natural gas have already been made in Block 22 and it is the intention of Centrica to commence development of this Block this year with the view of a possible mid-stream CNG project to be located in Tobago.

This augurs well for the future of Tobago's economy and the people of Tobago. My Government stands ready to work to ensure that Tobago is positioned and prepared for these developments when they materialize. I am advised that currently nine Tobagonians are employed by the NGC on this facility and they are members of the operating staff. It is intention of the NGC to further expand the cohort of Tobagonians working on this facility as the opportunity arises. As the Chairman has already mentioned, NGC has been working with the MIC to develop the technical skills needed for this operation.

In closing I would like to take the opportunity to commend the NGC for their work on this facility and the pipeline. The energy sector is still the most important contributor to the economy of Trinidad and will continue to play an important role in Tobago and Trinidad

Thank you very much and may God Bless you all.