

Prime Minister Rowley at Post Cabinet Media Briefing (Thursday 1st December 2016)

Welcome members of the listening and viewing public. Today I want to congratulate members of the national community for once again taking part in the a very important national exercise, we had our local elections and notwithstanding one or two instances of concern, by and large we've conducted our election very smoothly and the results ought to be official in a matter of a few hours, by tomorrow or so.

We await their final adjudication of the Elections and Boundary Commission which in our view at the government and the political party level, we are of the view that the elections was very well conducted and we as a country should be very pleased about that.

I simply want to inform the national population that now that the scheduled local elections are out of the way, that we now turn our attention more focused on some other matters which have been attracting our attention for the earlier part of the year. You may have been informed or know from other sources that Trinidad and Tobago has been engaged in some very very far reaching important discussions with our neighbour Venezuela with respect to our commercial association with respect to resources that now are in Venezuelan territory for which Trinidad and Tobago can provide an outlet.

The Ministry of Energy, the National Gas Company, the Venezuelan oil company and the Government of Venezuela for the last year would say, we have worked consistently towards arriving at a situation where commercial users of natural gas, which is of concern to Trinidad and Tobago, can find supplies from Venezuelan fields which are close to our users.

These discussions have progressed very smoothly and with a lot of very good corporation from the government of Venezuela at the government to government level; the Government of Venezuela and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago represented by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here, the Ministry of Energy and the Government of Venezuela represented by their Foreign Energy Ministry and their ambassador here in Trinidad and Tobago as well as the National Gas Company. We've had a lot of exchanges both in Port of Spain and Caracas and along with Shell who is partnering with Trinidad and Tobago in this exercise.

Shell being the owner of pipelines and platform in Trinidad and Tobago which can be considered for utilization in the entry of receipt of any gas from Venezuela. So between these various parties and sitting down and discussing what is possible for as a major commercial exercise we are now at the stage where we are in a position to sign the

Government to Government agreement and the commercial structure which will open the door for commercial exploitation of the Dragon Gas Field in Venezuela which is to the north of us here just beyond the Bocas. And that gas field would become the first major field that will supply gas from Venezuelan fields into Trinidad pipelines towards Point Lisas to supply our facilities there. We have done this in the context of looking after the future of Trinidad and Tobago in the medium and the long term.

The details of the arrangements would be made public later after the signing, but the whole expectation, the whole intention is that our operations here in Trinidad and Tobago can have a much longer future and the gas shortage which has been plaguing us for the last few years in the not too distant future will be dealt with a sustained and sufficient supply coming from the Venezuelan fields which will be processed here in Trinidad and Tobago and suppliers will export product into current market and other markets.

This is very good news for us in Trinidad and Tobago and the discussions that have been going on for months will come to ahead in Caracas when I travel there on Monday with a team from Trinidad and Tobago. It's a fairly large team headed by myself and those who are involved at the Prime Minister's Office end and the Ministry of Energy, their team, National Gas and of course we've invited the media, the main media have been invited so we expect that some media personnel will travel with us.

We are travelling by way of a charter of one of our ATR planes that will take the delegation to Caracas. We go in the morning, conduct this business and we come back in the afternoon on Monday. When we get back from Venezuela we will go into a bit more depth as to what the details are, what the numbers are with respect to what we have signed on to and we meet Shell. Shell will join us in Venezuela. So between all these various parties Monday is a very significant day for us.

And then as u know the THA has been dissolved on the advice of the Chief Secretary to the President. That was done in October. That dissolution now requires by law that an election be held within 90 days.

The 90th day is sometime in the first week in February. The Chief Secretary would have advised the President as required by law as to what date he would like the election held. But it is the President who will make that call after the relevant consultations and more importantly that the EBC's report which has been available. The EBC has submitted its report on the boundaries of the 12 electoral districts in Tobago. That report has to go to the Parliament and be approved by the Lower House.

That report has been laid in the Parliament and the Leader of Government Business has advised that the Parliament would meet next week Wednesday to treat with this matter. And once that matter has been successfully prosecuted in the Parliament and approved then the President will be in a position to call an election date for the THA. And so we move from the local elections in Trinidad to the THA elections in Tobago after the legal requirements have been met and satisfied.

We meet in Parliament on Friday. Friday we are allowing the Opposition to have a Private Members' Day on Friday, tomorrow because having not had the Parliament last Friday because of the election weekend we have agreed to allow this Friday to be used as Opposition Private Members Day. So those are the developments in front of you.