



The Legacy of the
**SHIPPING
ASSOCIATION
OF T&T**



Navigating the Future of Shipping



SONJA VOISIN
President of the Shipping
Association of T&T

Building Capacity in Our Sector

Behind every vessel, port, and shipment are the dedicated professionals who make our industry thrive. Investing in our people is essential to ensuring the continued success of the maritime sector. This includes providing opportunities for continuous learning, embracing diversity, and fostering a culture of safety and collaboration.

As an association, we are committed to supporting our members by ensuring they have the skills and tools needed to navigate the complexities of modern shipping. By investing in our people, we are securing the future of our industry.

Looking Ahead

As we move forward, collaboration will be the cornerstone of our success. The challenges facing our industry are multifaceted, and no single organisation can address them alone. That's why we are deeply committed to working closely with our members to drive meaningful and lasting change.

A significant milestone on our horizon is the launch of a comprehensive Shipping and Logistics Convention in 2025-2027. This event will provide a dynamic platform for networking, collaboration, and partnership within the shipping community.

Another key priority for SATT is the refurbishment of our

Sonja Voisin

At the helm of the Shipping Association of T&T (SATT) for the 2023-2025 term is a distinguished leader, Sonja Voisin. The members have great trust and confidence in her leadership, knowing that under her guidance, the SATT vision is being realised, and the future looks bright and promising.

Sonja's deep connection to the association is rooted in her family's longstanding involvement in the shipping industry. Her father, Lloyd Voisin, served as a past president and was a pivotal figure in the development of SATT during his terms in 1991-1992 and 1994-1995. Continuing his legacy, Sonja brings extensive business, sales, and leadership experience to her roles as Managing Director of Gulf Shipping and Gulf + Maritime.

A Glimpse into Sonja Voisin's Journey

Born and raised in Trinidad, Sonja

is an alumna of St Joseph's Convent, Port-of-Spain. She pursued her tertiary education in Canada and Miami, earning a BSc in Marketing from Barry University. She was a founding member of the Trinidad Club at university. Her athletic spirit during her youth saw her excelling in various sports, including ballet, netball, track and field, and hockey.

Sonja's career began at Johnson & Johnson Ltd as a product manager, where she gained valuable experience in overseeing brand performance. It was her passion for the family business, global connectivity and Caribbean advancement that led her to the shipping and maritime sector.

Sonja's parents, Lloyd and Shirley Voisin, acquired their lifetime employer, Sproston's Trinidad (agent for Saguenay Shipping). This marked an exciting chapter for the Voisin family. Sonja and her sister Tessa were eager to contribute to the company's development. Sonja found immense

fulfilment in building on the strong foundation laid by her father, whose legacy continues to resonate within the industry.

As her career progressed, Sonja held several key roles, including sales representative at Gulf Shipping Limited and Commissioner at the Port Authority of T&T. These experiences allowed her to develop expertise in securing and maintaining new business in the maritime sector and building strong networks with stakeholders. Sonja currently serves on the Board of Directors at National Flour Mills and holds several other directorships.

Sonja has served two previous terms as president of SATT, during which she advanced the interests of Trinidad and Tobago's shipping industry, promoted regional cooperation, and advocated for improved maritime policies. Her dedication and leadership continue to pave the way for other women in the industry.

premises to establish a Maritime Training and Administration Centre. This centre will create valuable opportunities for our youth, equipping them with the knowledge and skills to drive the growth of the maritime industry.

Our self-regulation initiative is also making great strides. We are working closely with the government to implement a policy for the regulation of shipping agents in Trinidad, including robust frameworks and licensing standards that will enhance governance, professional-

ism and efficiency of our sector. I thank all SATT members for their support and dedication to our

shared mission. Together, we are shaping a bright future for the Trinidad and Tobago shipping industry.

Reflecting on Our Journey

The past year has presented unprecedented challenges, from global supply chain disruptions to the push towards sustainability. Despite these hurdles, our industry has shown remarkable resilience. Regulatory pressures, such as the IMO 2050 decarbonisation targets, and technological advancements demand continuous innovation. Shipping remains steadfast in its essential role and we are embracing continuous innovation to stay ahead.

At SATT, we have been working diligently to support our members through these challenges, advocating for fair policies, fostering innovation, and promoting sustainability. Our goal is to shape the future of shipping in a way that benefits both our industry and the global community.

Driving Innovation and Sustainability

The future of shipping will be defined by our commitment to innovation and sustainability. We are dedicated to reducing our environmental impact, from adopting alternative fuels to enhancing energy efficiency and exploring new technologies. Digital transformation is another key focus, with smart shipping technologies revolutionising our operations, improving efficiency, safety, and helping us meet the evolving demands of global trade.

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Meet the SATT Executive Council and Management

The dynamic and interconnected nature of the maritime industry calls for an equally dynamic local body with the appropriate global mindset to effectively lead the development of the industry.

The Shipping Association of Trinidad and Tobago (SATT) proves to be more than an able leader in this regard by providing Much needed advocacy, capacity building and constructive collaboration for the optimisation of the Industry and its members..

Today, the SATT contributes to the development of the maritime industry and by extension national development through the provision of the following critical services to its membership.

About SATT

Our Vision

To be the recognised fraternity representing all shipping interests; for the continued development of the local maritime industry.

Our Mission

Driving industry development through advocacy, capacity building and influencing policy and legislation.

Membership

Today, the SATT's membership is representative of the interconnectedness of the shipping industry, not only are shipping agents and their principals; but members of the Association (as it was in the past), membership has also expanded to include ports, shipping industry consultants, surveyors, chandlers, NVOCCs, consolidators among other entities.

The SATT's membership is categorised into three groups:

Group A

Ship Agents, Ship Managers, Ship Brokers; Ship Owners and/or Ship Operators

Group B

Port, Dock and Terminal Operators

Group C

Service companies, trade unions, corporations and associations who are engaged directly in the mari-

time or shipping industries in T&T and whose business does not qualify them for membership in either Group A or Group B in respect of such business e.g. maritime surveyors, chandlers, consolidators and NVOCCs.

The SATT is also represented on almost every shipping-related committee or organisation local, regional and international. The Association is a founding member of the Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA). It is also represented on the local Pilotage Authority, Trinidad and Tobago Manufacturing Association, Trinidad and Tobago Chamber of Industry and Commerce and Trinidad and Tobago Coalition Services Industry.

The Association is represented on the Customs Brokers Board, which is the governing body for Customs Brokers and Boarding Clerks.

The expanded membership of the Association and its representation on local and regional bodies allow for increased expertise and experience in achieving its objectives and a platform to air the concerns of the Association at the governmental and multilateral levels, respectively.

To find out how you can become a member of the Shipping Association of T&T, contact us via email or call; Sattops@shipping.co.tt gm@shipping.co.tt www.shipping.co.tt Call: 623-3355 /609-3352



The new proactive and vibrant team Executive Council are steering the industry through an exciting time of transformation and are delivering a much needed strategic imperative, industry self regulation.

Seating front row from left:

Marlene Jeremiah – Group B Chair, Sonja Voisin – President, Shelly Balkissoon – Vice President

Back row standing from left:

Brenton Trim, Kevin Choo Quan – Group C Chair, Troy Persad – Trustee, Reynaldo Motil – Trustee, Stefan Mohammed – Group A Chair.



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Andre Isidore, left, Michelle Mulcare, general manager, Gregory Mc Letchie.

AMMSCO

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MEET OUR MANAGING DIRECTOR



ANGELIQUE ANDERSON

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Our History

CAPT RAWLE BADDALOO

Timeline of events

The Shipping Association of T&T (SATT) has a rich history in the maritime development of T&T. SATT was officially formed in 1938. However, there was a group before this date that influenced Maritime matters in the former British Colony. Due to a fire in 1987, a lot of crucial data was lost. Members have been magnificent in assisting to provide key information to record the history.



1919

Seamen and Stevedores riot - For years the seamen and stevedores employed on the port had been discontented with the wages and conditions of work. A strike resulted, which ended in mob violence towards the end of 1919. This period of unrest and feeling of injustice continued into the thirties; as a checker for example earned \$6.00/day with no overtime which was mandatory.

1930's

Marked a dramatic change in how labour and labour issues were treated. During this period the "Steamer Warehouse Association" was formed, as the main general cargo port in Trinidad. There was a sizeable fleet of lighters, tugs and launchers owned by the large colonial trading houses, GEO F Huggins & Co Ltd, Furness, Withy & Co Ltd, these and several others formed this loose Association to act on their behalf in the employment of port labour.

1936

During this year the Port Services and SWWTU were created. It was announced that Port of Spain would be developed alongside the Port. Thus heralding the creation of the "Port Services". Up until then Port of Port of Spain was an anchorage port. Vessels anchored off shore and cargo and passengers were transported ashore in lighters and launchers. The port workers organised themselves into the Seamen and Waterfront Workers Trade Union and applied to the Steamers Warehouse Association for recognition.

1937

The last Englishman as the Head of Port Services was Mr Culhane. Mr Mendes was the first local to replace him. With the announcement of Port of Spain to be developed, alongside the port, a group of agents were against the initiative due to the economic loss they foresaw. The port services were responsible for receiving, storing and delivery.

1938

On the formation of the SWWTU, they applied to the Steamer Warehouse Association only to realise that the Steamer

Warehouse Association was not properly constituted and had no locus standi to approve or enter into negotiations. Understandably, this caused great consternation with the ranks of the membership and eventually on April 29th 1938, the SATT was formed as a registered trade union specifically to negotiate with the SWWTU on behalf of its members.

The foundation members of the SATT were the well-known companies of the day. These were Archer Coal Depot Co Inc, Furness Withy and Co Ltd, Thos and Jas Harrison Ltd, Alstons and Co Ltd, Gordon Grant and Co Ltd, Gomez and Miller Ltd, WM H Kennedy and Co Ltd, JN Harriman Co Ltd, Geo F Huggins & Co Ltd, Lee Lum & Co Ltd, KNMS and Royal Mail Lines Ltd. The Ministry of Legal Affairs was previously Huggins building.

The first Industrial Agreement between SWWTU and the SATT was signed in 1938. At the same time, construction was completed on the Port-of-Spain deep water harbour known today as King's Wharf.

On February 16th 1939 the Harrison line vessel "Governor" was the first ship to dock at the new facility. Harrison played a vital role in the development of Port-of-Spain together with its local agent Geo F Huggins. It was some years later Harrison's would record an unprecedented six ships alongside the facility at one time. On September 15, 1939, the Pilots and Berthing Masters Association was incorporated.

The labour arrangements were that the SATT through its agents employed the stevedores who boarded the vessels to offload the cargo. The Port Services employed the longshoremen who looked after receiving, storing and delivering the cargo.

1939-1945

The Port of Port of Spain was kept very busy. It was a marshalling point for the American convoys which were handed over here before going on to Brazil and then Africa. The entire North West peninsula was very active. At the end of the war, the SATT resumed its activity as the employer of the stevedoring labour on behalf of its members. Their sphere



Capt Rawle Baddaloo
Former SATT President
1990-1991

of operations was extended to include some of the new additional ports which were developed such as Point a Pierre and Point Fortin and later Brighton.

Onwards

Work continued in the Port with the SATT playing its role, its main source of revenue had now moved from lightering to the provision of labour on behalf of its members. This augured well as the Association had almost folded when the removal of lightering came about. In 1961 a decision was made to form the Port Authority of T&T. T&T became independent in 1962 and the PATT Act proclaimed that the Port Authority was responsible for all ports in the twin island state.

However, the Act also stated that the ports of T&T were POS, Scarborough and San Fernando. The PATT now assumed the role of the employer of the Longshoremen having taken this over from Port Services. In 1968, the Government of the day announced the formation of Port Contractors. This body was given the responsibility to handle all labour i.e. Stevedores and Longshoremen. This indeed was bad news for the Association as its main source of revenue was being removed without any negotiation.

The situation was further compounded when the Chair of PATT was also made Chair of Port Contractors. The Shipping Association was very unhappy and while many discussions were held the position was permanent.

The future for the Shipping Association seemed bleak, however, SATT was innovative in finding new ways to survive and be self-sufficient. Port Contractors did not envisage making a profit and it was closed in 1979.

The 1970's saw a lot of turbulence, with labour issues and later the black power movement, which resulted in strike action and violence similar to the pre-war days, which caused further changes to the operational structure.

SATT Reinvention

To bring in new revenue streams, SATT introduced a charge on all cargo as a levy as well as membership dues. SATT started providing support to its members by negotiating with the PATT and other Authorities such as Customs and Excise, Immigration, Pilot and Berthing Masters Association, as well as advising members in a technical capacity.

They also provided training, lectures and seminars to assist members in developing shipping expertise. The Government recognising the technical expertise of SATT proceeded to appoint a SATT representative on both the Port Contractor's Board as well as a Commissioner of the Port Authority. Regrettably, that has ceased. The relationships with PATT and SWWTU have changed from one of hostility to one of mutual respect and assistance.

In 1971 together with other regional shipping bodies, SATT played an important role in the formation of the Caribbean Shipping Association. This body has proven to be a great wealth of Maritime knowledge with members not only from the region but worldwide.

1989

SATT recognised the changing need for its membership, which had grown considerably. Many new ports had been constructed in the now Republic as well and the quantum of Surveyors, Agents, Owners, forwarders and NVOCCS and Ship Chandlers had grown considerably.

While the bulk of the revenue was derived from levies on cargo paid by agents there needed to be some sort of equity and equal say for all members. A constitution was formed and three groupings were devised which are as follows;

- Group A - Agents and Ship Owners
- Group B Port Owners and Operators
- Group C - Surveyors Chandlers Forwarders and any others not in the above groups.

At the helm

SATT has some well-known names among its members. Clem Arneaud was one of the First Past President. Percy Cezair was the first General Manager of SATT and also a former Mayor of Arima. John Hutchinson - Twice Mayor of Port of Spain is a Past President and President of the Chamber of Commerce an unequalled distinction.

The list of Past Presidents and duration are as follows

Clem Arneaud- 1978-1979
Ignatius S Ferreira- 1979-1980
Michael J Blackman- 1980-1981
Patrick J Williams- 1983-1984
Colin Edgehill- 1985-1986
Michael Marshall- 1987-1989
Arthur AC Lawlor (dec.)- 1989-1990
Capt Rawle Baddaloo- 1990-1991
Stuart Jardine- 1992-1993
Noel Jenvey- 1994-1996
Lloyd Voisin (dec)- 1996-1997
Capt Rawle Baddaloo- 1997-1998
Barry Antoni- 1999-2000
Stuart Jardine- 2001-2003
Barry Antoni- 2003-2005
Sonja Voisin- 2005-2006
Stewart Sankar- 2006-2007
Haydn Jones- 2007-2009
Rhett Chee Ping- 2009-2012
Ernest Ashley Taylor- 2012-2014
Paul Jay Williams- 2014-2015
Rhett Chee Ping- 2015-2017
Sonja Voisin- 2017-2019
Garry Dalla Costa- 2019-2021
Hayden Alleyne- 2021-2023
Sonja Voisin- 2023-2024



A half-century of maritime leadership

The Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA) has been the steadfast champion of the region's maritime industry for over five decades. Born from the imperative need for a unified voice in the face of port modernisation, the CSA has evolved into an indispensable pillar of the Caribbean's economic architecture.

The association's journey commenced in 1971, a time when the mechanisation of ports across the region necessitated a centralised platform for industry stakeholders. From its humble beginnings, the CSA has grown exponentially, boasting a membership of over 100 individual members and 12 national shipping organisations. This diverse representation spans the public and private sectors, encompassing a wide range of maritime entities, including port authorities, terminal operators, shipping agents, lines, tug and salvage companies, consultants, and freight forwarders.

A cornerstone of the CSA's activities is its biannual conferences, typically held in May and October each year. These industry staples convene senior executives to examine the latest maritime trends and developments shaping the Caribbean region. Spanning two days, these gatherings offer a



A recent gathering of members of the Caribbean Shipping Association.

unique platform for knowledge sharing, networking, and strategic planning. By bringing together key decision-makers from across the industry, the CSA meetings facilitate the exchange of best practices, advance collaboration, and drive invention. These events are instrumental in identifying emerging challenges and opportunities, ultimately contributing to the growth and competitiveness of the wider shipping sector.

Similarly, our upcoming 54th Annual General Meeting, Conference and Exhibition in St Maarten from October 7-8, 2024 will provide an opportunity for the sector to connect with industry leaders, gain valuable insights, and contribute to the future of Caribbean shipping.

A further indication of the CSA's commitment to industry

development is its robust training programme. Since hosting its first training seminar in Barbados in 1982, the association has imparted knowledge and skills to tens of thousands of maritime professionals. The establishment of the Training Trust Fund in 1989 and the subsequent Monica Silvera Scholarship in 2005 have further solidified the CSA's role as a catalyst for human capital development in the sector.

Recognising the importance of data-driven decision-making, the CSA launched the Caribbean Research Institute (CRI) in 2021 to revolutionise how the industry accesses and utilises information. By employing rigorous research methodologies and leveraging data science, the CRI generates invaluable insights into the maritime, port, and logistics sectors.

Beyond its research and training endeavours, the CSA is a vocal advocate for industry improvement. The association actively promotes sustainability initiatives, recognising their vital role in safeguarding the region's natural resources and ensuring the long-term viability of the maritime sector.

As part of its charge to create a more sustainable maritime future, the CSA signed a partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) in 2023 to spearhead efforts to decarbonise the region's shipping industry. The partnership marks a decisive moment for the Caribbean, as it addresses the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while bolstering economic growth. This partnership is not only essential to safeguard the environment but also to enhance the region's resili-

ence to climate change and promote sustainable development.

Additionally, the CSA champions investments in modern port infrastructure, understanding that efficient and well-equipped ports are essential for facilitating trade and economic growth. By promoting cooperation among member nations and territories, the CSA is building a stronger, more united Caribbean maritime community. The sharing of knowledge and best practices is a cornerstone of the association's work, as it empowers industry stakeholders to make informed decisions that drive positive change.

The CSA's impact extends far beyond its membership. The association's advocacy efforts have contributed to shaping policies and regulations that support the growth and development of the Caribbean shipping industry. As the region continues to evolve, the CSA remains steadfast in its commitment to serving as the voice of its members and driving the industry forward.

With a rich history of achievement and a clear vision for the future, the Caribbean Shipping Association is poised to continue its legacy as a leading force in the region's maritime sector.



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Collaborative governance

The shipping industry is the cornerstone of global trade and economic growth, playing a crucial role in both energy and non-energy sectors. As one of the oldest industries, it remains indispensable in modern society. Without shipping, international trade would be impossible, as it facilitates the movement of goods and services across the globe.

Since its inception in 1938, the Shipping Association of T&T (SATT) has been a pivotal entity in the maritime industry. It provides expert technical advice on maritime and shipping matters, serving as a reliable resource for its members. SATT's commitment to advocating for key stakeholders and promoting trade facilitation and industry reform is evident in its recent initiative to establish self-regulation within the organisation. The primary goal of this project is to develop a regulated Code of Conduct to ensure good governance. Self-regulation can be achieved through voluntary measures or legislative action.

The Maritime Services Division (MSD) of the Ministry of Works and Transport, acts as the Maritime Administration of T&T, is tasked with ensuring the safety of navigation, the security of shipping, and the preservation of the marine environment. Both SATT members and the MSD are ded-

Enhancing maritime efficiency through self-regulation and international cooperation

icated to facilitating international maritime traffic, although operational conflicts may sometimes arise. A more collaborative approach is recommended to benefit the shipping industry and the end-users of the global supply chain.

T&T, with its rich maritime history, has always enjoyed a favourable geographical location. Situated outside the hurricane belt and strategically positioned between key trade routes connecting North and South America, T&T serves as a potential disembarkation point for ships navigating from the subcontinents. The country's connectivity to markets, robust export base, highly educated workforce, and political stability make it an attractive location for maritime services.

Globally, shipping accounts for over 85 per cent of the movement of goods and services. Much of what we use and con-

sume daily has been or will be transported by sea, whether as raw materials, components, or finished products. In this context, SATT and MSD collaborate with similar entities to implement strategies that facilitate international maritime traffic. This cooperation aligns with the primary purpose of the Convention on the Facilitation of International Maritime Traffic (FAL Convention) of 1965.

By implementing these strategies, potential conflicts can be effectively addressed, ensuring a smooth and successful implementation of the FAL Convention. This collaborative approach helps build trust, enhance communication, and achieve the common goal of improving maritime operations. The FAL Convention is crucial for T&T as it aims to streamline maritime operations and boost international shipping efficiency.

Its main objectives are to prevent unnecessary delays, promote government cooperation for smoother maritime operations, and standardise formalities and procedures across countries to reduce the regulatory burden on international maritime transport.

International maritime transport has traditionally been subject to over-regulation due to the independent development of customs, immigration, and other standards by different countries.

Ships visiting multiple countries often face numerous forms, asking for similar information in slightly different ways. The Convention addresses these challenges by providing a unified framework.

For T&T, implementing the FAL Convention involves aligning its maritime regulations with the convention's standards and recommended practices. This alignment is set to become a formal legislative reality with the Shipping Bill, which is currently before a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament.

Following this, the adoption of enhanced technological solutions, such as the electronic exchange of information and a single window system which is already in place to further streamline processes and improve efficiency in maritime operations.

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T&T Pilots Association

"The dynamic and interconnected nature of the maritime industry calls for an equally dynamic local body with the appropriate global mindset to effectively lead the development of the industry at the national level. The Shipping Association of T&T (SATT) proves to be more than an able leader in this regard."

(SATT website).

For the past 80 years, the SATT and the T&T Pilots Association (TTPA) have shared a long-standing relationship. Recently, the connection has evolved into one of mutual respect and co-operation. The commercial drivers of shipping, balanced by technical knowledge, represent the hyperlink between the two entities.

Professional pilotage services have aided trade at our nation's ports, as well as some of the most recent maritime projects. Some of these include the sale and removal of the floating dock at Chaguaramas in February, as well as the dry docking of national ferries which employed heavy lift vessels. By ensuring that vessels are transported into and out of ports securely, pilotage services further assist with the export of our manufactured goods, resources, containerised, and bulk cargoes - all of which drive the economy.

The Shipping Association's impact on shipping and the development of the industry has been a major driver behind the development and evolution of the pilotage services in Trinidad. The commercial ambitions of the shipping community rely on the technical expertise of harbour pilots, and in return pilots, themselves rely on the shippers to continue to develop the industry.

In a Small Island Developing State (SID), shipping is essential, therefore our ports and harbours constitute crucial infrastructure human resources which are another critical aspect. This is the reason SATT and TTPA invest in human capital development to support all capacity-building initiatives, and partnered on numerous ventures in this respect.

The TTPA continuously supports the initiatives of the SATT as their impact on connecting shipping lines, advocating local content, and consulting on numerous projects have brought life into the industry. We strive towards having a vibrant shipping industry which can compete globally and support the country's development.

JOHN-PAUL PANTIN

Pilot Master

Trinidad & Tobago Pilots Association.
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Unipet's vision and innovation: Paving the way in the Caribbean energy sector

As Unipet strides towards its vision of becoming one of the most admired sustainable energy companies in the Caribbean, its emphasis on collective strategic decision-making stands at the forefront. Dexter Riley, CEO of Unipet, articulates this vision as an ethos passed down from the company's founding fathers, focusing on customer service, safety, security, and innovative convenient solutions.

"It's about adding value to the customer," Riley said, indicating that every segment of the organisation contributes to shaping the company's direction.

The spirit of innovation is deeply embedded in Unipet's culture, driven by a mindset that embraces inclusivity and problem-solving. This culture has led to significant advancements, particularly in enhancing customer experience and digital solutions. Riley suggested that Unipet's value system UQUEST (uniqueness, quality, ethics, safety, one-team) has catalysed other product-oriented innovations, ensuring that the company remains a frontrunner in the energy sector.

Under Riley's leadership, Unipet has committed to several key sustainability initiatives focusing on five impactful United Nations Sustainable Development Goals: no poverty, climate action, clean and affordable energy, peace, justice & strong institutions, and partnership with

the other goals.

The company's strategic investments in FinTech and renewable energy sources, including solar energy and a network of EV chargers branded as U-Charge, exemplify its dedication to these goals. These initiatives not only align with global sustainability trends but also address specific community and environmental needs.

Kirt Hills, chief operating officer, shared insights into how operational efficiency is maintained across Unipet's field distribution network to meet the high standards of commercial clients. Through the integration of advanced information management and predictive technologies, the energy powerhouse ensures that customer needs are anticipated and met proactively. Hills highlighted the role of technology in streamlining operations, particularly through innovations in logistics and supply chain management, enhancing the quality and assurance of fuel delivery.

In an interview with Hills, he covered the future of Unipet's operational capabilities, and the anticipated impact of projects designed to enhance flexibility and cost management for commercial clients. Hills discussed the potential transformations in energy access, mirroring the convenience model of gas stations

to better manage inventory and working capital for businesses.

One of those anticipated projects is "Convenience Pay", a contactless payment solution expected to revolutionise customer transactions at service stations, enhancing efficiency, security, and user experience while aligning with Unipet's sustainability objectives by promoting a paperless environment. This represents a leap in financial technology within the Unipet ecosystem and Trinidad.

Unipet's brand strategy and digital engagement efforts are continuously enriched through targeted social media campaigns and content marketing strategies that educate customers on Unipet's innovations and sustainability initiatives.

As Unipet continues to expand its influence beyond Trinidad and Tobago, with plans to reach into markets like Jamaica, Guyana, and Barbados, its commitment to innovation, sustainability, and community engagement remains clear. These strategies not only foster growth but also ensure that Unipet maintains its role as one of the leaders in the Caribbean energy sector, fulfilling the vision of its founders and contributing positively to the communities it serves.



CEO of Unipet,
Dexter Riley

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New era for port operations in T&T

The PPP Project

The PPP Project T&T is poised for significant economic growth, with an anticipated annual GDP increase of 2% over the next decade. The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago (GoRTT) has been actively seeking foreign direct investment to foster economic development and diversify the nation's economy.

Various initiatives and incentives have been rolled out to attract investment in key sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, and services. Additionally, T&T has forged essential trade relationships with numerous countries and international organisations, benefiting from preferential trade agreements as a member of Caricom.

In line with these efforts, the GoRTT aims to boost private sector participation to create a more competitive and financially sustainable port system.

This move promises several advantages for the GoRTT including:

- Improved level of governance in the PPOS' operations
- Improved port activities and operational efficiency which can be positively leveraged to improve the ease of doing business in the country;

- Positive revenues via dividends, concessions and/or lease payments and taxes; and stimulation of the local manufacturing sector.

The Port of Port-of-Spain (PPOS) plays a crucial role in facilitating trade within T&T and throughout Caricom being a multipurpose port, handling containers, RoRo cargo and cruise vessels.

PPOS is the market leader in T&T and handles most of the country's containerised cargo trade. Currently, PPOS is not operating at International standards in terms of operational efficiency because of challenges with equipment acquisition and infrastructure upgrades to expand and attract more business.

Under these conditions, the Government of the Republic of T&T in collaboration with PATT, launched the Private Public Partnership project which will be based on a landlord model, under a Build-Rehabilitate-Operate-Transfer (BROT) scheme for a period of 25 years. The PPP envisages that all Cargo handling services under PPOS will be managed under the Private operator.

The PPP aims to enhance PPOS's efficiency and port competitiveness by achieving higher levels of operational

performance, availability of adequate equipment and a better-maintained port, transforming the port operations to international standards with a layout redesign to optimise capacity.

In this regard, competitiveness and service levels will be strengthened by increased berth depths coupled with the availability of adequate equipment ensuring improvement in turnaround times and crane productivity.

Increased berth availability and reduced waiting times will ultimately lead to increased business and profitability. There is also expected to be an opportunity to significantly increase general cargo traffic.

This strategic move towards a PPP model marks a transformative era for the Port of Port-of-Spain, positioning it to meet the demands of the global market and contributing to the nation's broader economic ambitions.

By leveraging private sector expertise and investment, Trinidad and Tobago can look forward to a more efficient, competitive, and financially sustainable port system that will drive economic growth and prosperity for years to come.

SOGET to improve fluidity and transparency in port operations

SOGET, a software factory, designs, develops and implements solutions dedicated to the facilitation of international trade, Port Community System (PCS), Port Operating System (POS) and Single Window. It's a neutral and agile unifying platform to connect the various IT systems used by regulatory and private actors involved in logistics supply chain processes including border management, port operations, logistics and warehousing, and international trading partners.

In 2023, the company won an international tender to set up (implement, maintain and operate) a "port and airport community system" (PCS), aimed at modernising and optimising the country's port and logistics operations. This new project is part of SOGET's ongoing development in the Caribbean, where it has been operating since 2002 in Guadeloupe and since 2015 in Jamaica. Its geographical coverage extends over four continents, 10 countries and 57 equipped terminals worldwide.

In July 2024, SOGET participated in a project presentation webinar organised by SATT (Shipping Association of T&T) and addressed to the entire port and maritime community. This initiative informed stakeholders of the objectives, expected benefits, and roadmap of this innovative project led by MTI.

The overall objective of the PCS is to increase the efficiency and competitiveness of port and logistics operations in Trinidad and Tobago. It will be implemented at the main ports, Port-of-Spain and Point Lisas, and the country's international airport, Piarco Airport.

SOGET's S)ONE system will connect the various IT systems used by regulatory and private actors involved in logistics supply chain processes including border management, port operations, logistics and warehousing, and international trading partners.

S)ONE's mission is to reduce the time it takes for goods to reach their destination by simplifying, automating and optimising business processes, while securing information and complying with international standards. The system allows for the seamless, intelligent and secure sharing of information, and consequently it's helping to improve co-ordination between the various players in the supply chain. The system will also improve the reliability of processes by the submission of data only once, reducing redundancy and errors. The PCS platform represents a major change, enabling us to move from "paper" to 100 per cent digital, by dematerialising the administrative, logistical and commercial processes involved in the movement of goods.

In total, more than 10 stakeholders are involved in the success of this project, including the government, trade associations, port, airport and customs authorities, under the aegis of the MTI. This close collaboration is essential to ensure that the PCS runs smoothly and is adopted by all stakeholders.

In conclusion, SOGET's PCS project promises to transform port, airport and logistics operations in T&T, positioning the country as a leader in port, airport and logistics modernisation in the region. In addition, the platform will improve fluidity and transparency throughout the logistics chain, strengthening trust between all the players involved.



A challenge of the working port in 2024

Managing the Triple Constraints in Terminal Operations Cost, space and time

CURTIS DENNIE,
Vice, Port Operations,
PLIPDECO

As a member of the SATT, it is indeed an honour to address the challenges that are faced by ports. The accelerated growth of containerisation has expanded the role of container terminals so that they have become crucial links in intercontinental supply chains. The sustained growth of the container market therefore demands higher levels of operation efficiency of container terminals.

As a consequence the port industry is under pressure to upgrade, provide cutting edge technology, and to improve terminal efficiency and productivity.

Among the challenges that are faced by the ports is the management of the triple constraints which are cost, space and time. These constraints must be regarded as strategic issues for port management. The triple constraints are also further challenging at ports with an aging infrastructure, archaic labour restrictions and resource limitations.

The working port is expected to facilitate trade logistics and reduce operating costs while increasing service quality and the effectiveness of operations. A container terminal is a complex system with three subsystems, namely, seaside operations, yard operations, and landside operations, all of which interact with each other.

The efficient receipt, storage and delivery of containers have an impact on port efficiency, productivity and operating costs.

The Challenge of Costs Constraints

Ports are exposed to equipment costs in the container retrieval process and the restacking of the yard. Ports face the stacking problem and equipment costs that are associated with spacial management. The stacking problem aims at properly locating incoming containers such that the future

handling effort (relocation or pre-marshalling) is decreased significantly.

Yard management therefore has an impact on the Port's bottom line. Terminal operations faced several operating costs, including labour costs, the cost of discharge by the crane, the transportation costs between the quayside and the storage area and the retrieval costs.

The key factor that determines the efficiency of port operations is the availability of the appropriate equipment. Cost management is a concern when the equipment and operators are engaged in the non-earning time of port operations. Thus direct costs can be significant since the number of moves that are involved in the shifting of containers have an impact on operations costs.

Therefore, cost management strategies must be employed since the constraint of space is a further limitation to the operations.

The Challenge of Space Constraint

The second constraint is the management of the limited container storage space.

Ports therefore have to optimise the operating strategies to increase the capacity of the terminal. Yard management is complex in practice and incorporates two interrelated decision problems that is faced by yard managers. The first is the space allocation problem, which is to determine the storage and the second is the deployment of the appropriate number of the yard cranes.

Multi-level stacking in blocks is one of the solutions most commonly used by terminal operators to increase the storage capacity. In some ports, containers are stacked between 4-5 tiers high. Ports can employ a segregation, a non-segregation strategy or linear stacking. As a result, during the retrieval process, the yard cranes perform one or more relocation moves. Such relocations (also called reshuffles) are costly for the port operators and result in delays in

the retrieval process.

The problem of space constraints does not impact the operations only but may result in delays in the clearance process which may have financial implications for importers.

The Challenge of Time Constraint

The third constraint is time, ports are pressured in their operations to facilitate the discharge and loading of vessels as quickly as possible. Time is a key determinant of port operations and has an impact on vessel turnaround. Vessels are scheduled for various ports with an estimated time of completion and estimated time of arrival at the next port.

The delay of vessels has several cost implications due to the time factor. Ports and carriers are concerned with berth productivity as a key performance indicator of the operations. The number of crane moves per hour is an international measure of the operations performance. The available window between the discharge time and the scheduled berth at the next port is limited thus carriers must make critical operational decisions.

The carrier may choose to discharge the cargo and limit the number of empty units for loading. This is known as the "cut and run" approach. Carriers may also swap ports of calls or skip ports of calls with a view prioritising a valued market.

The breakdown of equipment or industrial action during the operations contributes to unproductive time. Several ports have introduced terminal operating systems (TOS) to reduce time, costs and improve operational efficiencies.

Ports in the Caribbean are mostly limited by the hinterland due to their location in major cities.

The mathematical complexities that are associated with storage and yard planning demands that ports invest in technology, equipment and training. Ports should train and deploy specialist yard managers to fully

maximise their space, increase efficiencies and reduce costs.

Ports must employ the stacking model that best fits their environment and the available resources. Pre-planning of vessel operations with the Agent improves the coordination of activities and the assign-

ment of yard storage space. This activity creates predictability in the environment in terminal operations.

The challenge of the triple constraints can best be approached by yard planning, continued training and development and investment in technology.



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DS Belcon's regional strategy

DEVICA JHAGDEO-SINGH
Group Marketing Director

DS Belcon is dedicated to expanding its footprint and enhancing operations across multiple jurisdictions. Our strategy leverages our expertise and resources to deliver tailored solutions that meet the unique needs of each market we serve. By focusing on local engagement and building strong relationships with stakeholders, we aim to drive sustainable growth and create lasting value.

In Trinidad, we have established a strong presence, emphasising efficient logistics and exceptional service delivery. Our team is committed to understanding the specific challenges and opportunities in this market, enabling us to provide solutions that drive success for our clients.

In 2018, our CEO partnered with two business associates to establish Lall-Belcon (Guyana) Inc, which focuses on the energy sector, and offers port handling, customs brokerage, and immigration consulting services to primary companies in Guyana's oil and gas industry. In 2022, we founded DS Belcon (Suriname) NV, to provide port agency and logistics services to the Surinamese oil and gas sector.



The Trinidad team of DS Belcon.

Guyana, with its rapidly growing economy, is a key focus area for DS Belcon. We are committed to leveraging our expertise to support the country's growth through innovative solutions and active participation in community development initiatives.

Suriname presents a dynamic environment, where we are actively working to support the burgeoning energy sector. Our efforts include strategic partnerships and investments in local infrastructure to facilitate seamless operations and contribute to the country's economic development.

Our regional approach is underpinned by a commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility. We believe that investing in the communities where we operate, allows us to create a positive impact that extends beyond business.

DS Belcon's strategy is not just about expanding our geographic reach, but also about deepening our engagement and delivering exceptional results across the region. As we continue to grow, we remain dedicated to our core values of integrity, innovation, and excellence in service.



The team at Lall-Belcon (Guyana) Inc.



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ABOUT US

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Women have been employed in the maritime sector for an extremely long time. While it is very difficult to give very specific examples, my own observations and those of my colleagues in the 1950s and 1960s in the Eastern European Countries, Soviet Bloc and China are of female deck, engine and catering personnel.

When I first went to sea in the mid-1960s, the entire catering staff on the Norwegian tanker that I sailed on was female. The western flags and particularly the British were slow in moving in this direction. In the military, however, it was different, as women had been serving for decades. It is in marine facilities where the employment of women has taken an inordinately long time. In looking at the employment of women for sea-going duty, the first stumbling block is vessel design.

While one gender can comfortably share personal care facilities like bathrooms and toilets, it is uncommon for both genders to share the same facilities. In fact, in some jurisdictions it is illegal. I remember many years ago in a panel discussion where emerging female mariners indicated that this was a poor excuse. One had to go to great lengths to explain that while it may be comfortable for some willing to share facilities, there is a law. And, if anything outward occurred, the ship owner and Master would be charged or even imprisoned.

Night Work Act

In many jurisdictions (particularly those that were British), laws that remained after the attainment of political Independence prevented positive change to allow women to break the proverbial glass ceiling. And here I refer specifically to the Employment of Women (Night Work) Act. This law had its genesis in an ILO Regulation dating back to 1939. (The specific part of the Night Work Act stated that women were not to take up duty on night shifts. This in effect stopped the recruitment of women to do shift work which is the basis of all sea-going HR structures.)

This proved to be a huge stumbling block. In fact, in many jurisdictions, it was ignored. In Trinidad and Tobago, it was repealed on February 17, 2006, when the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSH Act) was passed. This legislation of Trinidad and Tobago made specific reference to the 1939 Act.

Women being employed were in many cases treated indifferently. Meritocracy has always



Women in the maritime sector

been my guide. However, the web and printed publications show a proliferation of situations in which women were subjected to inhumane treatment. And they were regularly bypassed or ignored when opportunities for promotion came along.

In the mid-1970s, the first British Texaco female cadets took up their assignments on board. As Chief Officer, I was honoured to have the care and mentoring of these young cadets entrusted to me. Before the ease of communication in today's world, going to sea and the length of voyages were daunting. Now it is less so and numerous female cadets and officers are serving on the full range of vessels if the accommodation allows it.

Sadly, however, ship and shore employment figures show only 29% of women being employed in the marine sector. And only 2% of percent of sea-going personnel are women. Notwithstanding the low numbers, there is a commitment to change by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO). Recently (May 18, 2022) the IMO declared the first International Day for Women in Maritime.

New talent

In the words of one participant during those celebrations "... for us, gender equality is, in the most direct sense of the word, a question of sustainability for the maritime sector. Put more bluntly, it is a question of economic survival! Why is that? The simple answer is: Rampant workforce inequalities and instability are becoming barriers that prevent the industry from accessing the resources it needs. So, the sector is struggling to attract new talent and tapping into the second half of

the population is becoming an imperative."

The situation in the wider Caribbean is lack of information. Maritime Education is open to a few. Maritime subjects are not on the standard school syllabus. More than 15 years ago, I embarked on an education project targeting the 14 and above age group in the secondary school system. The aim was to increase the cadet intake at the tertiary institution. It was magical.

From just a few young persons applying, the numbers rose to levels where class sustainability and continuity were no longer issues. Admittedly, there is some momentum now but this is still not enough.

There are other jobs in the system, not only sea-going. Land-based employers such as port administrations, government ministries, shipping agencies, ship owners and operators, freight forwarders and others need to be proactive and work with shipping associations, chambers of industry and commerce and tertiary institutions to look at training and course content and then address exposure and recruitment.

Tertiary Institutions that deliver undergraduate and postgraduate courses are receiving more female students. What is also encouraging is the well-balanced staff at these institutions. Indeed, my alma mater, the IMO's World Maritime University in Malmo, is led by the Caribbean barrister, Doctor Cleopatra Doumbia-Henry from Dominica. These trends will hopefully encourage more women to get qualified for maritime careers.

Improving

The collection of data on gender equality and, more so, the

general employment of women in maritime industries is improving. The IMO has been working to address gender imbalance for 30 or more years. Under this umbrella, eight thriving Women in Maritime Associations (WIMAS) have been formed. There are three Associations in Africa, and one each in the Arab States, Asia, Latin America, the

Pacific and the Caribbean (WIMAC). Modern vessel design allows for the employment of women. Privacy on board is protected. The job is no longer one in which brawn is needed. Women have taken up jobs as marine pilots in many parts of the world. This dangerous occupation has experienced a gradual increase in the employment of women.

It is clear that the number of women in maritime industries is growing. The trailblazers however cannot and must not sit back and reflect on the successes. Many unfortunate incidents are still being swept under the proverbial carpet.

The focus must be on meritocracy, mentoring and management. Appropriate laws are in place. Ship design is facilitating mixed-gender crews. The Maritime Authorities led by the IMO are working assiduously to encourage the employment of women in the maritime sector.

The senior members of the fraternity must now take on the responsibility of mentoring. Flag states T must remove all barriers that could prevent the employment of women. Nothing should bar qualified women from grasping opportunities and rising to the senior-most positions in the maritime sector.

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Transit Sheds: Improving Operational Security

The Shipping Association of T&T (SATT) is dedicated to driving industry development through advocacy, capacity building, and policy influence. Its mission is to represent all shipping interests, ensuring the continuous growth and competitiveness of the local maritime industry. The SATT's diverse membership includes shipping agents, port operators, ship owners, brokers, and transit shed operators (TSOs).

Transit Shed Operators play a crucial role in trade facilitation, working closely with Customs & Excise to ensure efficient revenue collection and national security. TSOs are responsible for the secure, timely, and cost-effective handling of imports, thereby mitigating avertable cost increases to consumers. These critical functions help maintain price stability and consumer confidence in the market.

In light of increasing security concerns and the need for enhanced levels of efficiency, TSOs are in the process of implementing non-intrusive inspection (NII) equipment. This advanced technology allows for improved cargo inspection whilst reducing physical examination, thereby speeding up the overall cargo handling process and reducing the risk of damage and pilferage. Despite the significant investment cost associated with the procurement of this equipment, TSOs are committed to supporting national security efforts, underscoring their integral role in maintaining a robust and secure supply chain for T&T.

SATT's advocacy and policy influence foster a favourable busi-



ness environment, encouraging investment and innovation in the maritime sector. Through capacity-building initiatives, we enhance the skills and competencies of industry professionals, ensuring the local maritime industry remains resilient and competitive globally. By uniting various stakeholders, SATT strives to create a cohesive and dynamic maritime community that drives economic growth and development for T&T.

Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre

The University of T&T (UTT) Centre for Maritime and Ocean Studies (CMOS) continues to be a premium centre for maritime education and training in the Caribbean region. The centre's Seafarer programmes continue to be certified and accredited by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) of the United

Kingdom (The only University outside of the UK that has received approval from the MCA), and the higher degree programmes are accredited by the Institute of Marine Engineering, Science & Technology (IMAREST). The centre maintains its status as an approved International Association of Maritime Institutions (IAMI) and Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) examination centre.

CMOS offers a range of programs to enthusiastic students, including the Diploma in Maritime Operations Navigation and Engineering. Both diploma programs have a duration of two years, during which students gain the essential knowledge required to become a Deck Officer of the Watch or Engineer Officer of the Watch, in accordance with the Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW) regulations. Upon completion of the required sea-time, the cadets complete their

IAMI or SQA exams, and then undergo oral examinations with UK MCA examiners, ultimately leading to the issuance of their UK Certificate of Competency (COC).

One noteworthy aspect of our educational institution is our extensive network of partnerships with renowned shipping companies. These partnerships offer cadets unparalleled exposure to diverse maritime experiences, encompassing a variety of vessel types, both within domestic and international waters.

Among these esteemed partners, we take pride in highlighting:

1. SMT Shipping—Over 50 cadets have joined and sailed on SMT vessels.
2. Proman/Northern Marine 12 cadets have since sailed on the Stena vessels.
3. Delta Logistics—Over 60 cadets have sailed on Delta Vessels.
4. Other Vessels—Over 85 cadets have been placed on cable-laying ships, and other offshore vessels of various types.

HOR

There are several opportunities associated with the program, one key advantage is the substantial financial support it receives from the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago.

This substantial funding enables the program to offer accessible tuition to students, making it an attractive option for many aspiring maritime professionals. However, one significant challenge faced by the program is the influx of a high number of cadets enrolling each year. This presents an issue because there are limited berthing

opportunities available for these cadets. Essentially, there's an imbalance between the growing number of program participants and the physical infrastructure to accommodate them.

CMOS is also strategically positioned to enhance the Caribbean's approach to addressing contemporary maritime issues, including the development of inclusive and innovative ecosystems for greener shipping. A direct outcome of this research is the delivery of quality technical reports and papers. The centre has also developed key partnerships and alliances with organizations such as the

International Maritime Organisation (IMO), European Union, Proman, BP, Shell, National Energy Company (NEC), Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCC), World Maritime University (WU), Caribbean Community (Caricom) Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA) Women in Maritime Association Caribbean (WIMAC), etc.

UTT CMOS is also the proud host of the Maritime Technology Cooperation Centre for the Caribbean (MTCC Caribbean). MTCC Caribbean currently oversees the implementation of the TEST Biofouling Project in the Latin America and Caribbean Region and the IMO CARES Project in the Caribbean Region. MTCC Caribbean is also expected to commence the GMN Phase II Project, carded for 2024.

KEVIN CHOO QUAN

SATT Group C Chairman
and Commercial Director
PAS Trinidad Ltd

The SAJ's 85 years of maritime leadership and community impact

As the Shipping Association of Jamaica (SAJ) celebrates its 85th anniversary, it's a fitting time to reflect on the organisation's significant contributions to the nation's maritime sector. Founded in 1939 amid a period of labour unrest, the SAJ has evolved into a central force driving the growth and development of Jamaica's shipping and logistics industry.

From its inception, the SAJ has been at the forefront of promoting harmonious labour relations within the sector. The establishment of the Joint Industrial Council in 1952 marked a significant milestone in this regard, encouraging a collaborative environment between employers and employees. Through its role as a labour hire organisation, the SAJ has also played a vital part in ensuring a stable and skilled workforce for the industry.

Beyond labour relations, the SAJ has been a champion of industry development and advocacy. The association has actively represented the interests of its members, advocating for policies that promote a competitive and sustainable maritime sector.

Many of the initiatives that have helped to create the modern transshipment and logistics industry which characterises Jamaica began in the SAJ boardroom. For example, computerisation of Port Bustamante commenced with the introduction by SAJ of a computer-based payroll system for port workers, which led to the initiation of the first Terminal Operating System, Cosmos, a Belgian product, at



Members of the SAJ take a tour of the harbour.

the Kingston Container Terminal. The SAJ also conducted research leading to the introduction of a port community system in Jamaica by the Port Authority (PAJ).

The PAJ itself, became operationalised when the SAJ selflessly seconded its general manager to become the authority's first President and CEO in the early 1970s.

The SAJ's involvement in regional organisations, such as the Caribbean Shipping Association (CSA), has further strengthened its influence and reach.

The SAJ is at the fore of initiatives to position Jamaica as a leading logistics hub in the Caribbean. In cooperation with key stakeholders, the SAJ actively explores opportunities to attract investments and en-

hance the country's maritime connectivity.

A significant milestone in this endeavour was the exploratory discussion held with the European Union (EU) and European Investment Bank (EIB) in early 2024. The focus of these discussions centred on the redevelopment of the Newport West shipping community into a world-class logistics facility, addressing chronic flooding issues and developing a comprehensive business model. The EU expressed keen interest in supporting this project and its implications for sustainable development and Jamaica's digital transition.

The SAJ's commitment to corporate social responsibility has been equally impressive. Over the years, the association has

invested in various initiatives aimed at improving the lives of its employees and the wider community. From scholarship programmes to community outreach projects, the SAJ has demonstrated a genuine concern for the well-being of those around it.

A notable example of the SAJ's social responsibility efforts is its adoption of the nearby Marcus Garvey Basic School in Greenwich Farm.

Through this partnership, the association has provided essential support to the school, including salary assistance, a feeding programme, and educational resources to hundreds of students for over three decades.

Recognising the importance of a qualified workforce, the SAJ has also prioritised training and development initiatives. The association has conducted numerous workshops and seminars on topics such as industrial safety, logistics management, and inventory management certifying over 100 successful participants already in 2024. These programmes have benefited hundreds of individuals from both the maritime community and allied industries.

As the SAJ enters its 86th year, it continues to focus on member empowerment, industry advocacy, and training initiatives.

The association's leadership remains committed to its mission of promoting the growth and development of the Jamaican shipping and logistics sector and maintaining its legacy of resilience, adaptability, and commitment to excellence.

The Shipping Association of Barbados (SAB) was established as a trade union body to serve the Shipping Agents and Stevedores, to promote the interest of the wider body and to represent the interests of its members on a regional and international basis.

On April 9, 2023 the stevedore contractual relationship between the Barbados Port Inc (BPI) and the stevedore member companies came to an end as the contract was terminated.

This relationship had been a cornerstone of the SAB since 1992. This change was indeed a watershed moment in the history of the SAB because this relationship was a significant event in the life of the Association. The dye had been cast, and the Committee assumed a transition role in leading the SAB,

The Shipping Association of Barbados

with the goal of ensuring its sustainability and revenue to manage the affairs of the association. Over the 40 years of its formation, the SAB has thrived in the face of adversity, and this year was no exception. With the loss of the stevedoring contribution as our major revenue earner, we had to seek other avenues to support the financial position of the association, revamp in various areas and keep the association going.

One of the association's goals was to strengthen links with or forge a stronger bond with the wider shipping community, the brokers, transport intermediaries and others who operate within the Blue Econ-

omy. Strengthening this bond can only auger well as we operate within the same space.

This goal/vision was not rooted in a transformative agenda, but to serve all members, as we firmly believe that the Association belongs to all members, to represent the combined interests in Barbados and the regional, and international community.

Now in its 44th year, SAB has faced recent challenges but with a determination and a commitment to ensuring its continued longevity, we press on. We found it necessary to reformulate management policies to resolve the problems arising out of such challenges and continue to strive forward in the interest

of our members and entire communities.

On the brighter side, we have redesigned our former website, making it user-friendly, to better serve our visitors and created social media pages to heighten public awareness in the industry and increase information sharing. We also continue to deepen our relationships with our partners, members, shareholders and regional and international communities.

The SAB's main goals remain unchanged and that is to continue serving the needs of our members and forge stronger bonds with the wider shipping industry and our community. The Shipping Association of Barbados is pivotal to the shipping community with a rich history in collaboration with the Barbados Port Inc and other related partners.



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The Forex Dilemma Challenges and Solutions

Access to US foreign exchange (FX) is a crucial aspect of the economy in T&T, impacting businesses, consumers, and the overall financial stability of the nation. However, the process of obtaining US dollars has become increasingly challenging, leading to a range of risks that could have serious implications for the economy. In this article, we explore the obstacles to accessing US FX, the risks involved, and potential solutions to mitigate these challenges.



HAYDEN ALLEYNE
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Challenges in Accessing US Foreign Exchange

Limited Supply: T&T's economy heavily relies on the energy sector, with revenues generated in US dollars. However, fluctuations in global energy prices and production levels have led to a decrease in US dollar inflows. This has resulted in a limited supply of foreign currency, making it difficult for businesses and individuals to access the US dollars they need.

High Demand: The demand for US dollars in T&T is consistently high. This is driven by the need for imported goods, payment for international services, and the repatriation of profits by foreign companies. The imbalance between supply and demand has led to a shortage of US dollars, creating challenges for businesses that rely on foreign exchange to operate.

Currency Controls: To manage the scarcity of US dollars, the government and the Central Bank of T&T have implemented currency controls, which limit the amount of foreign exchange available for purchase. While these measures aim to preserve foreign reserves, they also exacerbate the difficulties faced by businesses and individuals trying to access US

dollars.
Black Market Activity: The shortage of US dollars has fuelled a parallel underground economy where the currency is traded at higher rates than the official exchange rate. This creates a risk for businesses and individuals who may be tempted to engage in illegal transactions to meet their foreign exchange needs, exposing them to legal and financial penalties.

Risks Associated with Foreign Exchange Challenges

Business Disruption: The inability to access sufficient US dollars can disrupt business operations, particularly for companies that rely on importing goods or services. This can lead to delays, increased costs, and even business closures, affecting the overall economy.

Inflationary Pressures: The scarcity of US dollars can lead to higher prices for imported goods, contributing to inflation. As businesses pass on these costs to consumers, the purchasing power of the local currency diminishes, leading to economic instability.

Reputational Risk: International companies operating in T&T may face reputational risks due to the difficulty in accessing US dollars. Delays in payments to



foreign suppliers or partners can damage business relationships and tarnish the country's image as a reliable business environment, potentially deterring future investments.

Loss of Shipping Lines: The inability to pay international shipping companies in US dollars can result in the loss of critical shipping lines. If shipping companies find it increasingly difficult to do business with T&T, they may reduce or discontinue their services, leading to supply chain disruptions and increased costs for imported goods.

Economic Uncertainty: The ongoing difficulties in accessing foreign exchange contribute to economic uncertainty, which can deter foreign investment and slow down economic growth. Investors may view the situation as a sign of potential economic instability, leading to reduced confidence in the market.

Legal and Financial Risks: Engaging in black market transactions for foreign exchange exposes individuals and businesses to significant legal and financial risks. These activities are illegal and can result in severe penalties, including fines and imprisonment, further exacerbating the challenges of operating in such an environment.

Potential Solutions

Diversification of the Economy: Reducing the reliance on the energy sector by diversifying the economy can help stabilise foreign exchange inflows. Encouraging growth in other sectors, such as tourism, agriculture, and manufacturing, can generate additional sources of US dollars, easing the pressure on foreign exchange availability.

Promoting Exports: Increasing exports is a key strategy to boost foreign exchange earnings. The government can provide incentives for businesses to explore new markets and enhance the competitiveness of local products on the global stage. This approach can help increase the supply of US dollars in the economy.

Strengthening Currency Controls: While currency controls are necessary to manage foreign reserves, they can be refined to ensure that businesses with legitimate foreign exchange needs are prioritized to receive US dollars. Implementing a more transparent and efficient allocation process can help mitigate the challenges faced by businesses and reduce the need for black market transactions.

Encouraging Foreign Investment: Attracting foreign investment can bring in much-needed

US dollars to the economy. The government can focus on creating a more favourable business environment by improving regulatory frameworks, offering tax incentives, and enhancing infrastructure. This would not only increase foreign exchange inflows but also boost economic growth.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Educating the public about the risks associated with engaging in black market transactions and promoting legal alternatives can help reduce the demand for illegal foreign exchange. Increased awareness can also encourage businesses and individuals to support efforts to stabilise the economy.

Conclusion

The challenges of accessing US foreign exchange in T&T are complex and multifaceted, with significant risks for the economy. However, by implementing strategic solutions such as economic diversification, export promotion, and improved currency controls, the country can mitigate these challenges and build a more resilient economy. Addressing these issues requires a coordinated effort from the government, businesses, and the public to ensure a stable and prosperous future for T&T.

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