

Remarks for the Minister of Trade and Industry

at the

Media Launch of New TTBizLink eServices

L16 Nicholas Tower, MTI

10:00 a.m. | 8 April 2025

Good morning everyone

It is a pleasure to stand before you once again as the Ministry of Trade and Industry continues to expand and enhance the TTBizLink platform. Today's launch marks another milestone in the Government's unwavering commitment to modernisation and efficient service delivery.

Since its inception in 2009, TTBizLink has been a trailblazer, not just for Trinidad and Tobago, but for the entire Caribbean region. It was the first Single Electronic Window of its kind in the region, revolutionizing how businesses interact with government agencies by consolidating trade and business-related services into a single, streamlined digital platform.

Over the years, TTBizLink has earned international recognition for excellence, including awards from the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Most recently, in June 2024, it received the Best Online Public Service Award from the Ministry of Public Administration, a testament to its impact on modernising public service delivery.

TTBizLink has processed hundreds of thousands of applications, saving citizens and businesses time, reducing bureaucracy, and enhancing transparency.

In 2023, we launched the Enhanced TTBizLink Platform, introducing features to our thirty-seven (37) services such as:

- **Online payments** (allowing users to pay for services 24/7),
- **Digital approvals** (enabling instant downloads of stamped documents), and
- **QR code verification** (for secure authentication of permits).

Last year, we expanded the platform's suite of services with eleven (11) new offerings, including manufacturer and product registration for exports, local free sale certificates, controlled drug licences, several fisheries-related approvals, and scrap metal collector's licences and scrap metal dealer's licences. Six (6) of these services featured immediate online payment functionality, significantly improving accessibility and efficiency for users.

Building on this momentum, today we take another leap forward by integrating five (5) new services from two key agencies, the Ministry of Trade and Industry's Trade Licence Unit, and Tourism Trinidad Limited. This brings the total number of services to fifty-three (53), spanning twenty-five (25) government agencies across nine (9) Ministries.

Let me highlight today's key additions to the platform, each designed to further streamline critical business processes and improve the ease of doing business:

1. **Notice of Intention to Load Scrap Metal for Export:**

This service allows approved Scrap Metal Dealers in Trinidad and Tobago to request appointments for the supervision of loading of scrap metal for export by submitting their notice of intention to load online. The administering body is the MTI's Trade Licence Unit.

2. Permit for the Shipment and/or Alteration of Scrap Metal:

This service allows approved Scrap Metal Dealers to apply online for approval to reduce or modify the size of scrap metal, making it easier to transport to an approved scrap metal site for shipment. The administering body is the MTI's Trade Licence Unit.

3. Permit for the Shipment of Broken Machinery:

This service allows approved Scrap Metal Dealers to apply online for approval to ship broken machinery directly from the place of purchase, eliminating the need to transport it to an approved scrap metal site. The administering body is the MTI's Trade Licence Unit.

These services will streamline approvals, reduce processing times, and strengthen oversight, ensuring that the scrap metal sector operates with integrity while contributing to sustainable trade practices.

4. Interim Approval for a Tourism Project

This service allows entities to receive interim approval for incentives for the construction of tourism projects that would assist the development of the tourism industry. The administering body is Tourism Trinidad Limited, a special purpose state enterprise under the purview of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Arts.

5. Duty Free Permit for a Tourism Project

This service allows entities who have been granted Interim Approval to apply online for a permit to import items free of customs duty for the respective project. Tourism Trinidad Limited administers this service.

These new services will support investment and development in the tourism sector, which is an important contributor to economic diversification. By digitizing these processes, we are removing bottlenecks, attracting investment, and positioning Trinidad and Tobago as a competitive destination for tourism development.

Impact on the Ease of Doing Business

The expansion of TTBizLink aligns with our broader business facilitation reforms. You may recall the World Bank Doing Business Report, which was widely regarded as a benchmark for measuring countries' progress in improving the ease of doing business. Although the Report was discontinued by the World Bank in 2020, this Government remained steadfast in advancing reforms across key areas including:

- **Dealing with Construction Permits** – the 2020 launch of the Automated Construction Permitting System branded DevelopTT and the achievement of full automation of all planning application submissions in February 2023. This incorporates 28 Government Approvers across Trinidad and Tobago including Regional Corporations and Planning Regions under the Town and Country Planning Division.

- **Registering Property** – implementation of the *Property Business Registration System* (PBRs) in December 2021 by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs.
- **Starting a Business** – the introduction of the new *Companies Registry Online System* in February 2023 by the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs.
- **Trading Across Borders**
 - the introduction of the *Trade and Business Information Portal* in May 2022,
 - the launch of the *Enhanced Application System* in July 2023 which included the introduction of online payments, and expansion of new services in August 2024, and
 - the implementation of the first two (2) modules of Trinidad and Tobago's *Port Community System* planned for June 2025. The first two (2) modules are the Administration and Portal Module, and the Maritime Transport Module. Once the system is fully implemented in 2026, it will increase transparency and traceability in the clearance, movement and storage of goods across the supply chain, significantly reducing lead times, mitigating bottlenecks and enhancing the attractiveness of the Ports of Trinidad and Tobago.
- **Resolving Insolvency** – creation and operationalization of the *Office of the Supervisor of Insolvency* (under the Ministry of Finance) and the execution of a Reimbursable Advisory Agreement with the World Bank in December 2023 to address reforms to the bankruptcy and insolvency process through capacity building.
- **Managing Taxes** – e-Tax system under the Inland Revenue Division, which allows taxpayers to view their accounts, file returns, and correspond with the IRD.
- **Digital Payments** – the Trinidad and Tobago International Financial Centre (TTIFC) has been coordinating the digitisation of payments across the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. In addition to TTBizLink, digital payments are available across the public sector for a range of services including:
 - the purchase of standards and other payments under the Trinidad and Tobago Bureau of Standards;
 - eVisas and eStudent Permits under the Immigration Division of the Ministry of National Security;
 - Certificate of Environmental Clearance which is managed by the Environmental Management Authority;
 - numerous services for the Companies and Civil Registry under the Registrar General's Department, as well as the Intellectual Property Office.

The Ministry of Digital Transformation is also driving the Government's national development agenda through the implementation of the National Digital Transformation Strategy 2024-2027. This will, *inter alia*, empower businesses to participate in the digital

economy, by broadening the range of tools available for conducting more of their business online and increasing their adoption of online payments.

On March 26, 2025, the Ministry of Trade and Industry launched the National E-Commerce Strategy 2025-2030 which represents a comprehensive framework aimed at accelerating the growth of the digital economy, modernizing business practices, and enhancing e-commerce adoption among local businesses. The strategy is designed to expand market access, build consumer trust in online transactions, and strengthen the legal and regulatory environment to foster a thriving e-commerce ecosystem.

This Government recognizes that continuous business environment reforms are essential for maintaining Trinidad and Tobago's competitive edge. The progress we've made in modernising our commercial frameworks has already transformed our business landscape, and we remain committed to building on these achievements.

Closing

Today's success belongs to the dedicated TTBizLink team, our partner agencies, and the private sector stakeholders whose feedback proved invaluable. My sincere thanks to all who were involved in making this launch a reality.

Moving forward, we remain focused on expanding TTBizLink's services, improving user experience, and ensuring that Trinidad and Tobago remains a leader in modern, efficient business facilitation.

To the business community, I encourage you to take full advantage of these new services. To our public sector partners, let us continue collaborating to innovate. And to every citizen, know that this Government remains committed to delivering responsive, transparent public services for all.

Thank you, and may we continue to embrace progress together.