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# NEWSLINE

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**Akierra Returns to  
Cabinet as Minister  
of Home Affairs PG2**



**Connolly Slams  
\$550.8M Budget  
as "Retread" PG4**

# SEE YOU IN COURT

**Overlooked police officers to  
challenge promotion process  
in court.**



**>>> STORY ON PG5**



Akierra Misick (fourth from left) is photographed with members of the Washinton Misick Cabinet, shortly after being sworn in on Friday. Seated from left are: Her Excellency Deputy Governor Anya Williams; Her Excellency Governor Dileeni Daniel Selvaratnam; Premier Hon. Washington Misick; and Deputy Premier Hon. Jamell Robinson. Standing (from left); Hon. E. Jay Saunders – Minister of Technology, Innovation, and Energy; Attorney General Hon. Rhondalee Braithwaite-Knowles; Hon. Rachel Taylor - Minister of Education, Youth, Sports and Culture; Hon. Shaun Malcolm – Minister of Public Safety, Gender & Religious Affairs and Social Welfare; and Hon. Zhavargo Jolly – Minister of Tourism.

# AKIERRA RETURNS TO CABINET AS MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS

By Vivian Tyson NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

Former Deputy Premier Hon. Akierra Misick has officially returned to frontline politics, rejoining Cabinet in a key leadership role after a hiatus of several years.

Missick was sworn in as Minister of Home Affairs during a formal ceremony held Friday at the Governor’s Office in Providenciales. The oath of office was administered by Dileeni Daniel Selvaratnam in the presence of government officials, family members, and supporters.

The way to Missick’s return was paved after Hon. Otis Morris, former Minister of Public Service and Utilities was booted from the cabinet following a video alleged to have captured him in a compromising position. Morris, however, has vociferously denied the allegation, claiming that the video was an Artificial Intelligence (AI) manufactured reel, and vowed to clear his name.

Missick’s return marks a significant moment in national politics, as she rejoins the administration of Premier Charles Washington Misick, with whom she previously served during earlier terms in government. In her address, Missick expressed deep appreciation for the opportunity to serve again, while acknowledging the responsibility that comes with the role. She made it clear that her return is grounded in a commitment to national development and continuity.

“I do not accept this position lightly,” she said. “This country gave our government a second opportunity to continue building on the foundations that were laid, and we will not disappoint you.”

Missick highlighted several pressing issues facing the country, particularly in transportation and infrastructure. Referencing traf-



Premier Hon. Washington Misick congratulates newly sworn-in Minister Hon. Akierra Misick at the event on Friday, at the Governor’s Office.

fic congestion and the need for safer, more efficient systems, she indicated that meaningful reforms will be pursued under her leadership in collaboration with the Ministry of Physical Planning and Infrastructure Development.

She emphasized that solutions must ensure residents can commute safely and reliably, while also addressing insurance and broader public safety concerns tied to transportation.

The newly appointed minister also spoke candidly about the challenges ahead, warning that some policy decisions may not be immediately popular but will ultimately serve the country’s long-term interests.



Hon. Akierra Misick (right) taking the oath of office, which is being administered by Her Excellency Governor Dileeni Daniel Selvaratnam.

“We will have challenges, and we are ready to face them head on,” she said. “We will try things that you may not like, but trust that it is in your best interest as this country continues to grow and develop.”

Reflecting on her early political journey, Missick credited former Premier Rufus Ewing for inspiring her entry into public service. She recalled his vision of a Turks and Caicos Islands where citizens could retire in health, wealth, and security, a vision she said continues to guide her work today.

She also extended gratitude to her constituents in Leeward and Long Bay, who have elected her multiple times, as well as to her Cabinet colleagues and family members for

their continued support.

Missick used the platform to call for more meaningful public engagement, encouraging citizens to move away from negativity on social media and instead engage in constructive dialogue with government leaders.

“We are asking you to continue to dialogue... not throw hate on social media, but actually engage with us,” she said. “I promise you, I will come to you to hear from you.”

Premier Misick, in his remarks, welcomed her return and described her appointment as both strategic and necessary. He pointed to her legal background, experience, and work ethic as key factors in the decision to bring her back into Cabinet.

“This was a very thoughtful appointment,” he said. “We are a small country with limited capacity, and we must make the best use of the skills available to us.”

The Premier outlined several major initiatives ahead, including the digital transformation of government services, which will require new legislation in areas such as data protection and civil registration. He also highlighted the importance of inclusive governance and expanding district administration to ensure that all communities have a voice.

He acknowledged that the country’s rapid development presents complex challenges, requiring adaptability and collective effort from all sectors of society.

“Leadership is without easy answers,” he said. “We need the full cooperation of the public, private, and civic sectors to navigate the challenges that come with growth.”

Premier Misick also called for respectful public discourse, emphasizing the importance of constructive criticism and civic participation.



**A Dynamic Mobile Service provider seeks to recruit for the following post:**

**Job Title:** Field Force Engineer

**REPORTS TO (TITLE):** L1 Operations Manager

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Execute network infrastructure deployments in the field, including but not limited to base stations, antennas, and related equipment.
- Conduct routine maintenance, inspections, and troubleshooting of network assets, ensuring their continued reliability.
- Collaborate with cross-functional teams to plan and execute network expansion projects, optimizing coverage and capacity.
- Adhere to quality control measures in field operations, ensuring the highest standards of performance and reliability.
- Maintain detailed records of field activities, including equipment installations, maintenance logs, and inspection reports.

**Qualifications, knowledge & experience:**

- A bachelor's degree in Information Technology, Computer Science, or a related field is typically required.
- Demonstrate a minimum of 5 years of experience in field operations, ideally within the telecommunications industry.
- Exhibit technical expertise in deploying, maintaining, and troubleshooting network infrastructure and technology assets.
- Maintain a strong focus on safety protocols and practices in field operations.
- Understand fundamental networking concepts and equipment

**Compensation:** USD\$55,000 – 60,000 per annum

**DEADLINE:**

**Positions open to all qualified Turks and Caicos nationals. Interested applicants can forward their resumes to [hrtic@digicelgroup.com](mailto:hrtic@digicelgroup.com) The closing date for applications is May 9th 2026**

**VACANCY: FIELD ENGINEER**

**Primary objective of the job:**

- Responsible for the operation and maintenance of all RBS, Power and Transmission equipment within a specific region to achieve 100% availability of all Cell Sites
  - Monitoring of all environmental factors, buildings and grounds to include earth connections and measurements at Digicel sites in a specific region
  - Escalation & follow through of all anomalies to relevant departments
  - Scheduling of preventative maintenance rosters
  - Coordination of all site related work and projects
  - Coordination with MSC & Transmission engineer on outage solutions
  - On-call support for after hours outages & planned works as required
- Main Duties and Responsibilities:**

**Maintain inventory of RBS, Test and Transmission equipment**

- Monitor Return & Replace process, tracking RMA number & return date with Ericsson
- Oversee generator maintenance
- Liaise with equipment suppliers and maintenance contractors as required
- Generate & submit Planned Works for service affecting network activity in a timely manner
- Provide feedback on network performance as observed in day to day activities to MSC engineers
- Assist other departments with troubleshooting & engineering support as required
- Provide callout function & network support as required

**Academic qualifications and experience required for job:**

- Diploma in telecommunications/electronics or equivalent
- Minimum one (1) year experience in maintenance of telecommunications network
- Detailed working knowledge of Microwave transmission systems, radio transmitters
- Detailed working knowledge of DC and AC power systems
- Detailed working knowledge of GSM radio telephony operations
- Detailed working knowledge of associated test equipment

**Compensation:** USD\$55,000 – 60,000 per annum

**DEADLINE:**

**Positions open to all qualified Turks and Caicos nationals. Interested applicants can forward their resumes to <https://careers.digicelgroup.com> The closing date for applications is May 9th 2026**

# Connolly Slams \$550.8M Budget as “Retread” and Warns of Economic Stagnation

By Vivian Tyson, NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

Government backbencher and former tourism minister Josephine Connolly has delivered a sharp critique of her own administration’s more than \$500 million national budget, describing it as lacking innovation and ambition while warning of troubling economic signals.

Speaking during her contribution in the House of Assembly last week, Connolly, who obviously broke rank, compared the 2026/27 \$550.8-million budget to “a retread tyre,” arguing that it recycles old ideas without addressing the real challenges facing Turks and Caicos Islanders.

“There is nothing very new in this budget... it is equivalent to a retread, old ideas recycled,” she told lawmakers. “It appears devoid of fresh ideas and no apparent attempt to align policy to the lives of our people.”

## Concerns Over Economic Trends

Connolly pointed to what she described as worrying trends in key revenue areas, particularly tourism, long considered the engine of the economy.

She noted that accommodation tax revenues declined from \$130 million in 2024/25 to a projected \$122 million in 2025/26, calling it a potential red flag.

“A government that is expecting its biggest earner to do no better than two years ago is not showing the ambition that this country demands,” she said.

She also highlighted a downturn in stamp duty revenues, which she said dropped significantly, including a reported 25 percent decline in stamp duty fees, suggesting waning investor confidence.

“When people buy property, they are expressing confidence in the island and in the economy... we should all be worried by the decline in confidence,” Connolly added.

## Policy Criticism and “Unintended Consequences”

The backbencher was particularly critical of recent policy changes,

including new business licensing rules and reforms in the real estate sector, which she argued have had unintended consequences for local entrepreneurs. She warned that some Turks and Caicos Islanders may be forced to sell businesses below market value due to regulatory changes, while others have been excluded from participating in the real estate sector.

Connolly called on the government to revisit the business licensing framework and engage stakeholders to create a “transparent, reasonable and fair” system.

## Airport and Infrastructure Frustrations

Connolly also took aim at the government’s handling of airport development, expressing disappointment that no new airport has been built in Providenciales after five years in office.

She suggested that infrastructure challenges, particularly at the country’s main gateway, could be contributing to economic underperformance.

“Five years... and not a shovel in the ground, or a viable plan on the table,” she said, criticizing the shift toward renovating rather than rebuilding the facility.

## Tourism Policy Reversal Questioned

The former tourism minister raised concerns over the government’s decision to move away from the destination management organization model, known as Experience TCI, in favor of reinstating a traditional tourist board.

She described the move as “retrograde,” warning it could create costly administrative complications, including the liquidation of existing entities and unresolved financial reporting issues.

“The old Tourist Board is on life support, the DMO is about to enter intensive care, and the Tourist Board 2027 has not reached the maternity ward,” she said.

## Skepticism Over Mortgage Corporation

Connolly further criticized plans to establish a government-backed



CONNOLLY... “It is equivalent to a retread, old ideas recycled.”

mortgage corporation, likening it to past failed initiatives such as TCIInvest.

She warned that political interference and human nature could lead to loan defaults and eventual financial losses.

“Different name, but it will be the same outcome, a massive write-off in the future,” she cautioned.

## Call for Modernization

Among her recommendations, Connolly urged the government to prioritize modern banking reforms, including the implementation of electronic funds transfer (EFT) systems to improve financial efficiency.

She noted that delays in cheque clearing continue to inconvenience

residents and businesses.

## Refusal to Support Budget

In the meantime, Connolly made it clear she could not support the budget, citing increased public spending without meaningful improvements in citizens’ lives.

“I cannot support the stagnation and lack of ambition... this nation needs to move forward with energy and enthusiasm with fresh eyes,” she said.

Her remarks mark one of the most pointed internal criticisms of the Washington Misick-led administration’s fiscal plan to date, could be emblematic of the growing tensions within government ranks as public debate over economic direction intensifies.

# Overlooked RTCIPF Officers Move to Challenge Promotion Process in Court

By Vivian Tyson, NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

A group of officers within the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force is preparing to take legal action after claiming they were unfairly bypassed during the force's most recent round of promotions, raising fresh concerns about transparency and fairness within the organization.

According to sources familiar with the situation, the officers, comprising both Turks and Caicos Islanders and expatriates, believe the promotion exercise was flawed and are now seeking judicial intervention to review the process. Their aim is to have the court examine how decisions were made and determine whether the exercise adhered to established standards and principles of fairness.

The officers have reportedly already engaged a prominent law firm to represent them. While details remain limited, a member of the firm confirmed that discussions have taken place and indicated that further steps will be taken once formal instructions are received.

"Yes, we have been approached, but that is as far as I can say at this point," the attorney noted, declining to elaborate further.

Sources close to the matter describe the affected officers as experienced and hardworking individuals who have dedicated years of service to the force. Many of them reportedly feel that the process did not adequately reflect merit or performance and believe that a more balanced and transparent system could have produced different outcomes.

The latest promotion exercise represented a significant shift from past practices within the force. For the first time, interview panels were not limited to senior police officers but also included representatives from civil society and the private sector. This move was intended to enhance transparency and public confidence in the process.

Police Commissioner Fitz Bailey, under whose leadership the promotions were conducted, before and after the promotions were made, has strongly defended the approach. He described the exercise as one of the most transparent in the history of the force and highlighted the inclusion of external panelists as a key improvement.



Police Commissioner Fitz Bailey

Bailey previously noted that some officers expressed relief at not being assessed solely by internal panels, which they felt could sometimes create additional pressure. By contrast, the inclusion of independent voices was seen by some as a step toward greater impartiality.

Following the interviews, panel members were tasked with recommending candidates they believed were suitable for promotion. However, it has emerged that not all individuals recommended by the panel were ultimately promoted, adding to the concerns raised by those now considering legal action. Bailey revealed that approximately 46 percent of officers assessed

during the exercise were promoted, marking one of the most substantial internal restructurings in recent years. He emphasized that the process was carefully designed and strictly followed.

"We outlined what the process would be, and we stuck to it," Bailey then stated, underscoring that the promotions were carried out in line with established guidelines. He added that the final selections were made with a view to strengthening leadership within the force and supporting its ongoing transformation.

Despite these assurances, dissatisfaction remains among some officers. Sources claim that at least one candidate who reportedly per-

formed well during the assessment process was overlooked, while others who scored lower were selected for advancement. Such claims have fueled perceptions of inconsistency and have intensified calls for greater scrutiny.

The interview panel included several prominent figures, among them Deputy Permanent Secretary Edgar Howell, Pastor Colin Sterling, Permanent Secretary Tamera Robinson, and media personality and certified public accountant Drexwell Seymour.

Seymour, when contacted, maintained that the interview component of the process was conducted fairly. He explained that all candidates were asked the same set of questions, ensuring consistency and eliminating any potential advantage.

However, he stressed that the interview was only one part of a broader evaluation framework. Performance in written examinations and other assessment criteria also played a significant role in determining outcomes.

He noted that it was possible for a candidate to perform strongly in the interview but fall short in other areas, or vice versa. As such, final decisions reflected a combination of factors rather than a single metric.

Seymour also acknowledged that some officers with exemplary service records may have narrowly missed promotion due to marginal differences in scores. In such cases, he suggested that there may be room for future consideration, particularly for those who demonstrated strong overall performance but did not meet all the required benchmarks.

As the situation develops, the potential legal challenge is expected to place the promotion process under close scrutiny. Beyond the immediate concerns of the affected officers, the case could have wider implications for how promotions are conducted within the force, particularly in balancing transparency, fairness, and accountability. With tensions rising and legal proceedings on the horizon, the outcome may ultimately shape future promotion practices within the Royal Turks and Caicos Islands Police Force and influence broader public confidence in the institution.

# Towards a Taxi Service for TCI: Rethinking How We Move on Providenciales

An Op-Ed by Paladin

## Traffic at a Breaking Point

Traffic in Providenciales has reached what many residents now describe as “Titan sized” proportions. What was once a mild inconvenience has become a daily ordeal, stretching commutes, fraying tempers, and sparking a wave of public frustration. Across social media, radio call ins, and letters to the editor, the message is the same: something must change.

Several ideas have surfaced. Some residents call for a proper mass transit bus system, financed through a partnership between the Turks and Caicos Islands Government (TCIG), private investors, and the public. Others argue for water taxis to move workers along the coast without adding more vehicles to the already clogged roads.

But there is another option worth placing squarely on the table: a modern, regulated, island wide taxi service.

## The Jitney Reality

TCIG has already taken quiet steps toward licensing some of the illegal jitneys that have long filled a gap in the transportation ecosystem. These drivers emerged because the need was real: people without cars still needed to get to work, to church, to the grocery store. No formal system existed to serve them, so an informal one grew in its place. The question now is whether we continue patching the informal system — or build something better.

## A Blended Approach

If TCI is to build a modern taxi network, it should be done in a way that reflects our values: partnership, transparency, and shared prosperity. That means TCIG working alongside a private operator and offering shares to the public. If the system is profitable — and it will be — residents should have the opportunity to benefit.

It would be a rare and welcome signal that uplifting the com-

munity is not just a slogan but a practice.

## REDEFINING TRANSPORT IN TCI Existing Categories

- **Livery:** Vans and buses serving the airport.

- **Limousine:** Black cars catering to high end airport clientele.

- **Taxi:** The missing middle — smaller sedans with a roof top sign or sticker, metered or prepaid, serving everyday residents. Livery and limousine services would continue unchanged. The new taxi class would fill the gap between them.

## Pricing in a Post Jitney Landscape

Residents have grown accustomed to jitney pricing — roughly \$2 for a short 2–3 mile trip. A formal taxi cannot match that price point exactly, but it can remain affordable.

A proposed hybrid model — part meter cab, part ride share — would set fares around **\$3.50 for a two mile trip:**

- **Base fare:** \$2.00
- **Distance rate:** \$0.75 per mile
- **Total:** \$3.50

The meter would tick every tenth of a mile, similar to modern ride share apps. Shared rides would allow passengers to split costs while drivers earn slightly more for additional stops.

This is not a decree — it is a template.

## BUILDING THE SYSTEM

Below is a vision of what a fully modern, cashless, tech enabled taxi network could look like if TCI chooses to build one.

### 1. The Digital Backbone

A unified platform would manage:

- On demand dispatch
- Shared ride pooling
- Scheduled trips for schools, nightlife, and staff transport

Airport trips would remain reserved for livery and limousine services.

### Core Infrastructure:

- Real time GPS tracking
- Compliance monitoring
- Transparent trip logs
- API access for hotels,

restaurants, and government agencies

### 2. Cashless Payments

A modern taxi system must accept:

- Credit/debit cards
- Apple Pay, Google Pay
- Prepaid ride credits for tourists

Every ride would be pre authorized, automatically calculated, and digitally receipted. Drivers would receive payouts instantly or daily.

### 3. Smart Dispatching

Assignments would be based on:

- Nearest driver
- ETA
- Traffic conditions
- Vehicle type
- Fair rotation

Priority would be given to:

- Hotels and resorts
- Restaurants and nightlife hubs
- Essential trips
- Wheelchair accessible vehicles

Drivers would use an app with navigation, earnings dashboards, safety alerts, and multilingual support.

### 4. Shared Rides

A well designed pooling system would:

- Match riders heading in similar directions
- Allow a 5–10 minute detour tolerance
- Use dynamic pricing to encourage pooling

- Increase driver earnings for additional stops

Pooling is not just a convenience — it is a congestion reduction strategy.

Pooling is not just a convenience — it is a congestion reduction strategy.

### 5. Regulation and Oversight

A modern taxi system requires:

- Digital verification of licenses, inspections, and insurance
  - Automatic suspension of expired documents
  - Government approved fare bands
  - Transparent fare display before booking
- A government dashboard would

show:

- Real time taxi activity
- Demand heat maps
- Compliance alerts
- Shared ride adoption rates

### 6. A User Experience for Locals and Visitors

Rider App Features:

- Instant booking
- Scheduled rides
- Fare estimates
- Live tracking
- Multi stop trips
- Digital receipts
- In app support

Tourist Friendly Features:

- Hotel to restaurant pre-sets
- Multi currency fare display
- QR codes at taxi stands
- Offline booking mode

Accessibility:

- Wheelchair accessible filters
- Voice assisted booking
- High contrast interface

### THE BIGGER PICTURE

This is not just about taxis. It is about dignity, mobility, and the future of Providenciales. It is about creating a system that reduces congestion, supports workers, empowers residents, and reflects the modern, world class destination TCI has become. A taxi system built on transparency, technology, and shared ownership would not only move people — it would move the country forward.

If we are bold enough to build it.



Journalism of Accuracy, Balance & Courage

NEWSLINE TCI is located at  
1085 Leeward Highway,  
Providenciales,  
Turks & Caicos Islands, BW1.

Our numbers are:  
1649 348-9587  
1649 242-6695  
You can email us at  
[contact@newslinetci.com](mailto:contact@newslinetci.com) or  
[viviantyson@newslinetci.com](mailto:viviantyson@newslinetci.com)

Vivian Tyson – Editorial Department



A Dynamic Mobile Service provider seeks to recruit for the following post:

**Job Title:** ICT Engineer

**REPORTS TO (TITLE):** IP Operations Engineer

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Attend technical meetings with internal and external stakeholders
- Conduct pre-installation site surveys to ensure all is in place for actual installations
- Installation of hardware and software to support DIA, Fixed Voice and Cloud technologies
- The provisioning of services for related DIA, Fixed Voice and Cloud technologies
- Prepare Scope of Work (SOW) documents for all installations
- Ensure Acceptance Test Plan (ATP) are executed at the end of each installation and signed by customer
- Ensure that Customer Acceptance Form (CAF) and Customer Premise Equipment Form (CPEF) are signed by customer at the end of each installation.
- Maintain a database of customer installations which includes device inventory, SOW, network diagrams, circuit diagrams, software licenses and ATP.
- Ensures that services are delivered to customers in a timely and professional manner.
- Ensure that all DIA, Fixed Voice and Cloud elements are implemented with appropriate level of security, and interfaces to allow for full surveillance and remote monitoring.
- Liaise with ICT/Business Services Management team to ensure timely, accurate and professional delivery of services.
- Provide timely and accurate reports as per business requirement.
- Provide IT/IP Support to other departments and external parties as required
- Manage Windows AD infrastructure, DNS, DHCP and Domain Controllers.

**Qualifications, knowledge & experience:**

- B.Sc.in Computer Science or equivalent with at least three (5) years experience in IP & Data technology.
- Cisco CCNA/CCDA Required
- Cisco CCNP Voice or Check Point CCSA will be an asset
- Installation and configuration of Cisco Routers/Switches/IP PBX, Mitel, Avaya, Nortel IP PBX/Legacy PBX, Check Point and/or Cisco Firewall, Wireless Routers/Access Points, Voice Gateways and Analog Terminal Adaptor
- Functional operations, maintenance of Video and VoIP technologies.
- Network Security.
- Structure and operation of Internet gateway links.
- Network planning, engineering and development.
- Report writing Additionally, should be familiar with:
- Project management of medium to large projects, preferably rolled out to users across multiple sites
- Analytical and performance reporting/generating tools.
- SLA development and performance management tools.
- Knowledge of OS such as Linux/Unix and Windows is an asset

**Compensation:** USD\$55,000 – 60,000 per annum

**DEADLINE:** Positions open to all qualified Turks and Caicos nationals. Interested applicants can forward their resumes to [hrtic@digicelgroup.com](mailto:hrtic@digicelgroup.com) The closing date for applications is May 9th 2026



Deandra Astwood Front Office, who was crowned Platinum Team Member of the Year, is seen here being celebrated by Managing Director Jamie McAnally (right), and General Manager Deryk Meany.



Administrative professional Tanya Swann received the Sandals Foundation Sentinel Award. She is seen here accepting her award from Public Relations Manager Orville Morgan.

# Beaches Turks and Caicos Honours Outstanding Staff at Prestige Star Awards

Excellence, dedication, and service were celebrated in grand style as Beaches Turks and Caicos hosted its annual Prestige Star Awards on Thursday, April 30, recognizing outstanding team members across multiple departments.

The ceremony, held at the resort, brought together staff and management for an evening dedicated to honoring individuals whose performance and commitment have made a significant impact on the guest experience and overall operations.

Among the top honorees was Katherine “Tinkerbell” Jiminez of the Entertainment department, who captured the Movers & Shakers Award, while Kadian Smith of Restaurant Services was celebrated as a Legendary Team Member. In Security and Loss Prevention, Emanie Jocelyn Seide earned the Circle of Joy Award, and Bernard Florvil of Engineering and Maintenance was named Earth Guardian. Administrative professional Tanya Swann received the Sandals Foundation Sentinel Award, highlighting her contributions beyond the workplace. The prestigious General Manager’s



Javain Campbell (with crown) of the Restaurant, is joined on stage by some colleagues, to celebrate his Diamond Team Member of the Year distinction Award.

Special Awards were presented to a trio of standout employees: Eric “Cookie” Johnson (Kitchen), Harriet Beeput (Administration), and Javier Sarita (Entertainment), each recognized for exceptional service and leadership.

Other notable winners included:

- Richard Myers (Laundry), who received the Standing Ovation Award
- Teesha McCallum-Hamilton (Heart of the House), named Mon-

ey Maker Award recipient

- Carlton Biggs, honored with the HM’s Award
  - Claire Ann Balones (Off Site), who secured the People’s Choice Award
  - Kassandra Henry (Accounts & Cost Control), recognized as Pacesetter Award recipient
- Leadership excellence was also a key focus of the evening. Chad Peterkin of Engineering and Maintenance earned All-Rounder of the

Year (Supervisor of the Year), while Susan Outten (Restaurant) was inducted into the Founder’s Circle. The coveted MVP of the Year (Manager of the Year) title went to Felipe Luzardo Neira of the Kitchen department, reflecting his outstanding managerial performance. Team success was equally highlighted, with Loyalty & Travel named A-Team of the Year, demonstrating strong collaboration and results. Rounding out the awards, top individual performers included Deandra Astwood (Front Office), who was crowned Platinum Team Member of the Year, and Javain Campbell (Restaurant), who earned the Diamond Team Member of the Year distinction.

The Prestige Star Awards continues to serve as a hallmark event for Beaches Turks and Caicos, reinforcing a culture of excellence and recognizing the employees who consistently go above and beyond in delivering world-class hospitality. The resort praised all nominees and winners, noting that their passion and commitment remain central to maintaining the Turks and Caicos Islands’ reputation as a premier luxury destination.

# FSC CONFIRMS OVERSIGHT AND ONGOING REVIEW OF SCOTIABANK DEBIT TRANSACTION ISSUE

The Financial Services Commission (FSC) is aware of the recent delayed posting of certain Visa debit point-of-sale transactions by Scotiabank (Turks & Caicos) Limited and has been in regular communication with the Bank since the matter was first reported.

Scotiabank has advised the Commission and its customers that the delays were caused by a processing issue linked to a system change by the Bank's card service provider. The Bank has confirmed there has been no breach or compromise of its systems or client data and that its infrastructure remains secure.

Scotiabank has also informed the FSC that affected transactions will be posted in a controlled and validated manner beginning yesterday, Monday, April 27, and that personalised communications have been issued to impacted clients.

As regulator, the FSC supervises and may assess the adequacy of licensees' systems and controls, enforces applicable legislation and international standards, and acts to protect the public from financial loss while safeguarding the jurisdiction's reputation.

In line with these responsibilities, the FSC is:

- Monitoring the Bank's remediation actions and timeline to en-

sure accurate and timely posting of affected transactions;

- Seeking and assessing impact and receiving assurance that there is no impact on clients' funds and that there has been no impact to client funds or data security;
- Prepared to require further corrective measures or make recommendations should any gaps be identified.

The FSC encourages any customers with questions or concerns about their accounts to contact Scotiabank (Turks & Caicos) Limited directly. The Commission will continue to stay in close contact with the Bank and will take any supervisory action

necessary to protect depositors' funds and uphold regulatory standards. Further updates will be provided if material developments occur. Customers who have experienced challenges in having their matter resolved are invited to submit a complaint via the Commission's official complaints portal: <https://www.tcifsc.tc/complaints-against-license-holders>



Kenisha Bacchus, Acting Director of the FSC



The Strand Resort

## The Strand Records Strong Growth in Early 2026 as Demand Surges

The Strand at Cooper Jack Bay in Providenciales is reporting a strong start to 2026, with significant growth across both its resort operations and residential real estate offerings.

According to a recent update, the luxury resort-residential community has expanded its rental program to 69 keys, up from 39 during the same period last year. The increase reflects continued construction progress and the addition of new residences, with further completions expected in the coming months.

According to The Strand, this expansion has been matched by a

sharp rise in demand. Bookings at the property have increased by more than 500 percent year over year, signaling growing interest in the development as it matures within the Turks and Caicos Islands tourism and real estate market.

Located along the secluded coastline of Cooper Jack Bay, The Strand is increasingly being recognized as a well-positioned destination offering both privacy and high-end amenities. Recent improvements to landscaping and beachfront infrastructure have contributed to the property's evolving appeal, with the beach-

front now fully established and the grounds more developed.

Developers have also confirmed plans to begin construction on several new amenities, including a spa, children's club, and an artist-in-residence apartment. These additions are expected to enhance the resort's long-term value and broaden its appeal to both visitors and property owners.

The resort has indicated that sales activity has accelerated alongside the resort's growth, with a limited number of units remaining. Available inventory includes four villas, comprising one two-bedroom and three three-bedroom homes, as well as four Signature Residences. The remaining villas are fully

completed, furnished, and already integrated into the rental program, generating consistent income while remaining available for owner use.

Meanwhile, The Strand further noted that the Signature Residences are positioned as a premium offering, featuring four-bedroom layouts with ocean views and dual primary suites. The finalized interior designs emphasize natural materials, open-concept living, and seamless indoor-outdoor integration.

With demand rising and inventory narrowing, The Strand appears poised to continue its upward trajectory as one of the notable resort-residential developments in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

# Oseta Jolly Primary Students Shine in Black History Month Essay Competition

Ten talented students from Oseta Jolly Primary School showcased their writing skills and pride in their heritage when they participated in the Department of Library Services' essay competition held in February, in celebration of Black History Month.

The competition, which aimed to highlight influential Black figures from the Turks and Caicos Islands, invited students to write about "A Successful Black Person from the Turks and Caicos Islands Whom I Admire."

The entries reflected a mix of personal admiration and community pride, with most students choosing to write about their family members, teachers, principals, and school warden. One student went further, penning an essay about a notable island and regional figure, although that entry did not place.

The contest was divided into two categories: ages 7-9 and 10-12. In the younger category, Jakes Chambers took first place with a heartfelt tribute to the school's warden, Mrs. Mandy-Forbes-Young, while Princess Williams secured second place with an inspiring piece about her teacher, Mrs. Diana Dean. In the older category, Destiny Hall earned first place for her moving tribute to her mother, exemplifying the personal connection many students felt toward the theme.

While the students eagerly anticipated the promise of prizes and certificates, their participation in the competition offered more than just potential rewards. Engaging in such events encourages students to reflect on their heritage, develop their writing skills, and foster a sense of pride and community. Participating



Princess Williams



Destiny Hall



Jakes Phanord

in these competitions helps young minds understand the importance of their history and inspires them to aspire toward success, just like the figures they admire.

As the students continue to grow and learn, their involvement in activities like this highlights the importance of celebrating cultural heritage and nurturing the leaders of tomorrow.

1st Place winner, nine-year-old Jakes Phanord reacted: "Wow, I am so proud of winning first place in the Black History Month Essay competition! I chose to write about our school's warden because I think she is a really successful Black person from the Turks and Caicos Islands, even though most people don't see her as famous or important. I wanted to show that success isn't just about being a doctor, lawyer, or politician — it's also about working hard, helping others, and making a difference in your community.

"The warden might not be famous on locally, regionally, or internationally, but she is famous to over four hundred students and thirty staff members. Ms. Mandy, as we affectionately call her, keeps our school safe and makes sure we play safely and interact respectfully with each other. I think that's pretty inspiring.

I wanted to remind everyone that even the everyday heroes can be successful and admirable."

Second place winner, nine-year-old Princess Williams pointed out that: "I'm truly happy to have won second place in the Black History Month Essay competition! I chose to write about my teacher because she is a very successful Black person, in her own unique way, and I admire her a lot.

"Even though teachers might not always be seen as famous, they do so much to help us learn and grow. My teacher works hard every day to make sure we understand our lessons and feel happy at school. I think she is a real hero because she cares about her students and makes our school a better place.

"I wanted to share how success isn't just about being famous — it's about making a positive difference in the lives of others, just like my teacher does every day.

First place winner in the second category, 11-year-old Destiny Hall reacted: "I am so proud to have won first place for my essay about my mother. Writing about her was special to me because she is the most important person in my life, and I see her as a true example of success.

"My mother is strong, kind, and always there for me, even when things are hard. She works so hard to take care of our family and makes sure I never give up on my dreams. To me, her love, courage, and hard work make her a real hero, and I wanted to share how she inspires me every day. "She may not be famous to everyone, but to me, she is the most successful person because she makes our home full of love and hope.

Teacher, Mrs. Diana Dean expressed her delight at the achievements of the students. "I am so incredibly proud of each of our students and their amazing achievements in this competition. Our school entered a total of about 12 pieces, and we are thrilled to have captured three of the six winning positions — two in the 7-9 age group and one in the 10-12 age group.

"Seeing our students succeed and share their stories with honesty and passion is truly inspiring. This win is a special milestone for our school, and it shows the talent, dedication, and hard work of our young writers. I feel so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with such talented students, and I couldn't be happier for their success. They have made us all proud."

-Contributed

# Professional, Practical Way to Solve Traffic Situation on Providenciales

*An Op-Ed by Bennett Williams*

The road situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands needs urgent attention, but the approach to solving it must be professional, practical, and based on proper planning.

Traffic is now one of the biggest everyday challenges facing residents, especially in Providenciales, and it cannot be addressed through guesswork or rushed decision-making. If the country is serious about improving the situation, then the process must begin with accurate data, careful analysis, and a willingness to consider both short-term and long-term solutions.

One important point is how traffic information is gathered. Data should not be collected only during peak hours and then used as the sole basis for decision-making. That can lead to assumptions instead of balanced conclusions.

Traffic should also be studied during lower-volume hours so planners can properly compare normal conditions with rush-hour conditions. This would help create a clearer picture of how the roads function throughout the day and what peak traffic should realistically look like.

A proper traffic study should be done by professionals who understand road flow, bottlenecks, and future growth patterns.

As I said in a previous article, one of the long-term solutions should be the construction of a road on the south side of Providenciales to better accommodate traffic moving to and from Grace Bay, Leeward, and Long Bay. These areas continue to grow, but the road network has not expanded at the same pace. A southern route would provide another option for motorists and reduce pressure on the existing main roads. This kind of expansion is necessary if the country wants to keep up with development instead of constantly reacting after congestion becomes unbearable.

At the same time, I believe it would be too expensive and too disruptive to completely rebuild Leeward Highway. Rather than rebuilding it from the ground up, focus should instead be placed on maintaining it properly, improving traffic control, and enforcing the law more effectively.

Leeward Highway remains one of the island's most important roads, and better maintenance alone



would make a difference. Authorities should also address the issue of unlicensed drivers on the road, as that adds to disorder and increases the risk of accidents. In some areas, traffic lights may work better than roundabouts, especially where congestion becomes severe and traffic movement needs tighter control.

There are also certain roads that should be reviewed for one-way traffic as part of a broader traffic management plan. Turtle Creek Drive, Suzy Turn Road, and Lower Bight Road from Turtle Cove to Pratt's Road should all be considered.

A one-way system on those roads could ease pressure and help reduce the bottleneck around the Suzy Turn roundabout. These kinds of measures should be studied carefully, but they are worth serious consideration because the current traffic flow in those areas is clearly not working well enough.

Another issue that needs attention is the movement of large trucks carrying construction equipment and supplies. These vehicles add major pressure to daytime traffic and slow down movement for everyone else. One possible solution would be to restrict the operation of large construction trucks to late-night and early-morning hours, perhaps between 11:00 p.m. and

6:00 a.m. That would keep heavy vehicles off the roads during the busiest parts of the day and improve the general flow of traffic. A policy like that would need proper planning and enforcement, but it is the kind of practical measure the country should be discussing.

There also needs to be a broader conversation about the number of vehicles on the road. Some may not agree, but I believe there should be stronger controls to help reduce traffic volume.

For example, families without car rental businesses could be limited to one vehicle per household, or at least some type of policy could be introduced to discourage unnecessary multiple-car ownership where possible. In addition, work permit holders could be encouraged, or in some cases required, to rely more on public transportation or motorbikes instead of adding more cars to the roads.

These ideas may be controversial, and they would require careful legal and social consideration, but they should still be part of the discussion if the country is serious about reducing congestion.

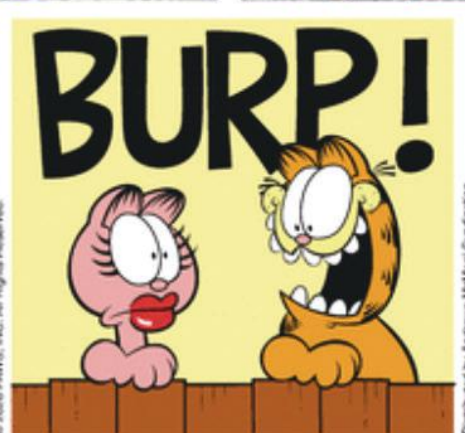
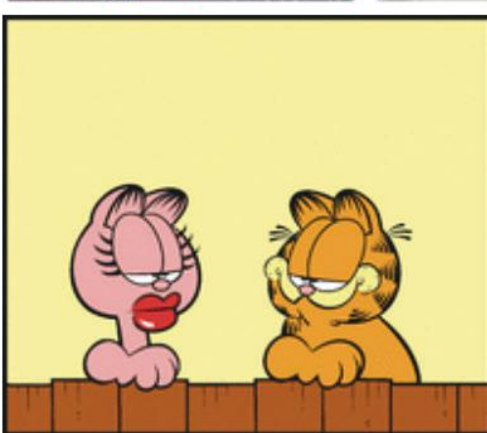
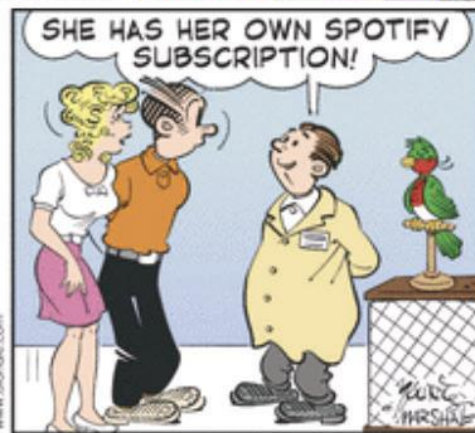
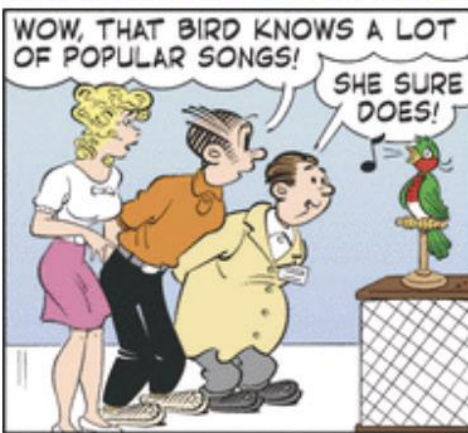
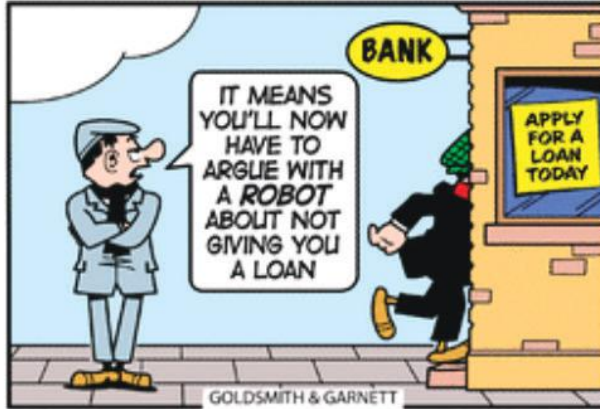
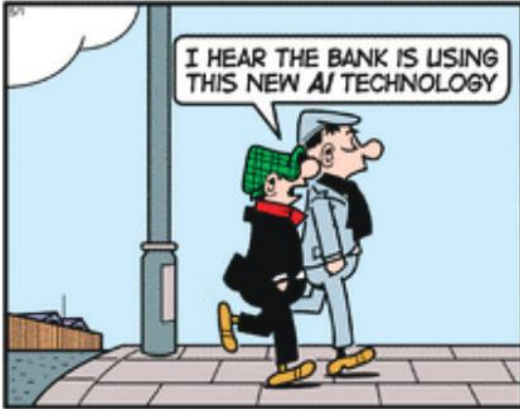
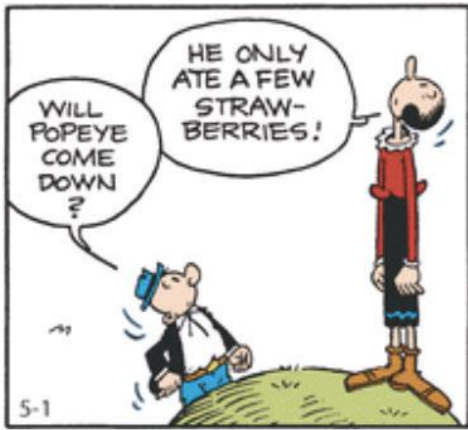
At the same time, public transportation must improve. It is difficult to ask people to use fewer private vehicles if there is not a reliable alternative. Any serious traffic solution should include a stronger

public transport system, with proper routes, schedules, and safe, affordable options for workers and families.

The Turks and Caicos Islands also has people within the country who should be able to contribute to solving this problem. We have knowledgeable residents, engineers, planners, and experienced professionals who understand the roads and the daily traffic challenges.

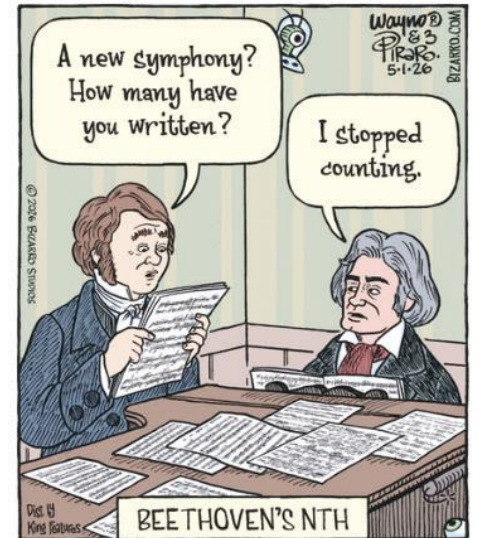
Their voices should be part of the conversation. Where local expertise is not enough, the government should invite professional traffic and transportation specialists into the country to properly assess the situation and recommend solutions.

This should be treated as a national planning issue, not a casual discussion. Some solutions may take time, and some may involve trial and error before the right mix is found. But that is still better than doing nothing. The truth is that the Turks and Caicos Islands is at least 15 years behind in road development and traffic planning. The country has grown, but the road network has not grown with it. The time has come for serious, informed, and forward-thinking action before the situation becomes even worse. Let's adapt the Bermuda Traffic Laws.



# NEWSLINE TCI COMICS

When a post contains the sentence,  
**"I BET ALL OF MY FRIENDS WILL SHARE THIS."**  
 REST ASSURED, I WON'T.



National Trust Turks and Caicos Islands. (2020). Cultural Heritage and Traditional Music of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Sadler, H. (2006). Turks and Caicos Islands: Lands of Discovery. Macmillan Caribbean.

Visit Turks and Caicos Islands. (2019). Culture, Music and Festivals of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

# RIPSAW music

NEWSLINE

Heritage

For generations, Ripsaw Music has been a defining sound of the Turks and Caicos Islands. Recognised as the national music of the islands, ripsaw reflects the creativity and resilience of a people who transformed simple tools into instruments of cultural expression (Visit Turks and Caicos Islands, 2019).

At the heart of ripsaw music is the carpenter's handsaw, an ordinary tool repurposed to create a unique rhythmic sound. The saw is bent and scraped with a metal object, such as a knife or screwdriver, producing a distinctive scraping tone known as "ripping" (National Trust TCI, 2020). This sound forms the foundation of the music, often accompanied by drums, shakers, and other instruments. The rhythm is lively and expressive, commonly heard at festivals, community gatherings, and cultural celebrations across the islands (Sadler, 2006).

Ripsaw music is believed to have developed during the islands' early working years, when labourers used whatever materials were available to create music and pass the time. Like many forms of Caribbean folk music, it emerged from everyday life and reflects the shared experiences of the people (Visit Turks and Caicos Islands, 2019).

Over time, ripsaw has evolved while remaining rooted in tradition. It continues to be performed by local musicians and passed down through generations, preserving a sound that is uniquely Turks and Caicos. Today, ripsaw music stands as a powerful symbol of national identity and cultural pride. Its distinctive rhythm and resourceful origins serve as a reminder that the islands' heritage is not only seen, but also heard in the sounds that bring communities together (National Trust TCI, 2020).



# Youth in Action: Rotaract Club of Grand Turk Driving Change in Grand Turk

The Rotaract Club of Grand Turk is continuing to make a measurable impact across the island, with a strong lineup of initiatives carried out during the third and fourth quarters of its service year. Focusing on community needs, the club partnered with the Premier Arts Collective and a local non-profit organisation to package and distribute more than 150 care bags filled with essential food and hygiene items to residents across Grand Turk, helping to address food insecurity.

Health and social awareness were also prioritised through the club's "HAN-WASH for Hope" initiative, which targeted period poverty by providing sanitary supplies to students at the H.J. Robinson High School. The effort aimed to support students' well-being, confidence, and school attendance.

Environmental sustainability efforts extended beyond Grand Turk through the Salt Cay Sustainability Project, a collaboration with Pelican Energy Ltd. And members of the Salt Cay community. The initiative saw the donation and painting of waste bins, encouraging proper waste disposal and environmental responsibility.

Youth development remained central to the club's mission. A hands-on DIY Workshop engaged children ages 5-12 in creative building activities alongside their parents, promoting teamwork, problem-solving, and skill development in a fun, supportive environment.

On February 28th, the Rotaract Club of Grand Turk joined forces with the Bible Study Ministry's Youth in Action and other youth groups to host its first "Play for Peace" event. The initiative focused on conflict resolution, featuring interactive breakout sessions on inner peace, peace at home, and digital well-being, along with music and art therapy elements that encouraged expressions and dialogue.

Closing out the quarter, the Club hosted a Corporate Wellness Fitness Scavenger Hunt on 11 April 2026. The island-wide event brought together corporate teams to promote fitness, teamwork, and community engagement. Proceeds from the fundraiser will support the club's upcoming "Prep a Child for School" Initiative.

"These past two quarters have truly shown the power of collaboration and youth leadership," said Nia Jones, President of the Rotaract Club of Grand Turk. "From supporting families in need to empowering young people and promoting sustainability, our goal has always been to create meaningful, lasting impact. We are proud of what we have accomplished, but even more excited for what's ahead as we continue serving our community."

These efforts reflect the Rotaract Club of Grand Turk's continued commitment to service, leadership, and community impact, demonstrating how youth-driven initiatives can create lasting change across the island.



# Life Line FEATURED CHURCH

## Church of God of Prophecy, Blue Hills

This week on Newsline Featured Church, we shine the spotlight on the Church of God of Prophecy, located in Blue Hills, Providenciales. The church is led by pastor Andrew Stone. There are at least six opportunities for worship during the week. On Sunday at 9:30a.m. is Sunday School. On Sunday 11a.m. is Divine Sunday Morning Service. On Sunday at 7:30p.m. is Evening Service. On Tuesday at 7:30p.m. is Prayer Meeting. On Wednesday at 7:30pm is Bible Study, and on Friday at 7:30pm is Youth Ministry. For further about any of the worship opportunities, contact 1 649-941-3438.



## Life line Church Directory

Looking for a worshipping house to praise God and fellowship with members of the body of Christ, here is a list of some of the available sanctuaries you can attend throughout the Turks and Caicos Islands.

**Firm Foundation Ministries International**  
Lee Street, South Caicos. Telephone: 649-348-3581

**Christ is the Answer Ministry,**  
George Alley Off Aviation Drive, Providenciales  
Tel: 241-8030

**One Nation Empowerment Center Church Ministry,**  
Suite #12 Alliance Business Center, Princess Drive,  
Grace Bay, Providenciales. Tel: (649) 244-6194.  
Email: apostleyoung1952@yahoo.com.

**Touch of Love Ministries International Center**  
Industrial Park, Five Cays, Providenciales  
Tel: 941-4903 Fax: 941-7731

**Abundant Life Ministries International**  
P.O. Box 696 Christian City, Leeward  
Highway, Providenciales  
Tel:941-941-4750 Fax: 941-4755

**Anglican Church Rectory Grant Turk,**  
Front Street, Grand Turk. Tel:946-2289

**Bethany Baptist Church,**  
Blue Hills, Providenciales  
Tel:941-4803 / 941-5632 / 941-5118

**Church of God of Prophecy,**  
Lower Bight, Providenciales Tel: 941-8854

**Bible Study Ministries, Grand Turk**  
Tel:946-1866

**Calvary Baptist Church,**  
South Caicos. Tel:946-3212

**Harvest Bible Chapel TCI,**  
Leeward Highway, Long Bay, Providenciales.  
Tel: 1649 333-2009 Email: hbctciinfo@gmail.com.  
<https://www.harvesttci.com>.

**Rock of Jesus Ministry,**  
15 Five Cays, Safe Haven.  
Tel: 649-3317628 of 649-2410087

**Firm Foundation Ministries International**  
19 Honour Lane, Behind Smart Supermarket ,  
Providenciales. Telephone: 649-332-6240

**Church of God of Propesy,**  
Providenciales Tel:941-3438

**Roman Catholic Church,**  
Providenciales, Tel: 941-5136

**Faith Tabernacle Church of God,**  
Providenciales, Tel:946-4073

**New Testament Church of God,**  
Orea Alley, Grand Turk Tel:946-2175

**New Testament Church of God,**  
South Caicos Tel:946-3631

**Methodist Church,**  
Grand Turk Tel:946-2352

**Healing Waters Ministries,**  
Blue Hills Providenciales Tel: 941-5867

**House of Prayer Church of God,**  
Long Bay Road Providenciales Tel: 941-8309

**Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses,**  
Darrell Road, Grand Turk Tel:946-2727

**Mount Mariah Baptist Church,**  
Conch Bar Middle Caicos Tel:946-6205

**New Beginning Harvest Ministry,**  
Pond Street, Grand Turk Tel:946-1759

**New Testament Church of God**  
Orea Alley  
P.O. Box 495 Blue Hills, Providenciales  
Tel: 946-1255  
Airport Road, South Caicos  
Tel:231-2402

**Firm Foundation Ministries International**  
Waterloo Road, Grand Turk.  
Telephone: 649-332-624

**Paradise Baptist Church,**  
Five Cays, Providenciale  
Tel:941-4349

**Revival Faith Center,**  
North Backsalina, Grand Turk  
Tel:946-2349

**Salem Baptist Church,**  
Mission Folly, Grand Turk  
Tel:946-2565

**Solid Rock Apostolic Ministries**  
International,  
Discovery Bay Providenciales  
Tel: 946-5181

**St. Monica's Anglican Church**  
P.O. Box 866 Cheshire Hall Providenciales  
Tel: 946-4046  
Fax:946-4046;941-8499

**Turks and Caicos Mission of Seventh**  
Day Adventists,  
P.O. Box 803, Providenciales

**United Pentecostal Church,**  
Brown's Plaza, Leeward Highway,  
Providenciales Tel: 956-5852

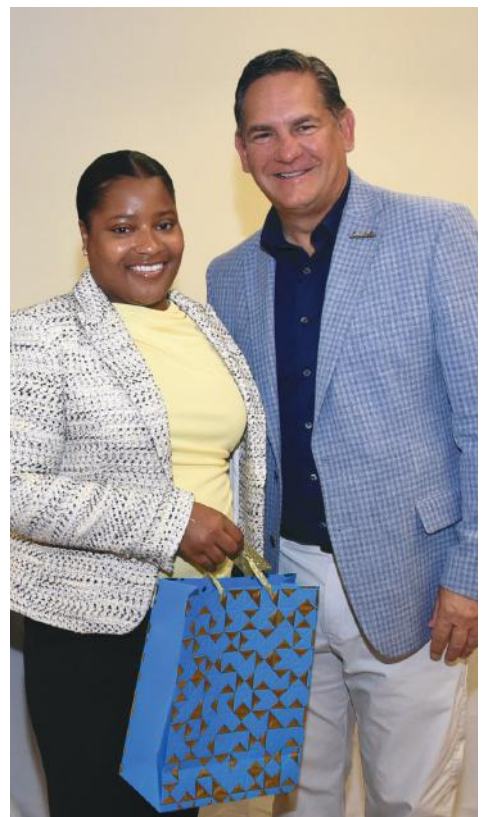
**Wesleyan Methodist Church,**  
Blue Hills, Providenciales  
Tel: 946-4075; 941-4223; 941-3596

*Editor's Note: If your Ministry is not listed and/or you would like for it to be part of the NEWSLINETCI Church Diary, contact us at: [contact@newslinetci.com](mailto:contact@newslinetci.com)*



# Relaunch of TCHTA YOUTH FORUM

The Turks and Caicos Islands Hotel and Tourism Association (TCHTA), on Tuesday, April 28, relaunched the Young Leaders Forum, at the Blue Haven Conference Room in Providenciales. The Leaders were encouraged to, among other things, encouraged to draw their experience from more seasoned tourism players within the industry. Deputy Premier and Minister of Immigration and Border Services Hon. Jamell Robinson was the guest speaker at the event. The following are photo highlights of the affair.





# A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A STRESSED NERVOUS SYSTEM

## *Why your body feels tired before the day even starts*

By Monica Uttamchandani  
Holistic Health Coach, Turks and Caicos

Let's walk through a very common day.

You wake up already feeling behind. Your phone is the first thing you reach for. Emails. Messages. Notifications. Your nervous system switches on immediately.

Breakfast gets skipped or rushed. Coffee becomes your first source of energy. Blood sugar rises briefly, then drops. Cortisol steps in to keep you functioning.

By mid-morning, your focus feels scattered. You might feel anxious or irritable without knowing why. Your lunch is quick. Energy dips again shortly after.

The afternoon brings you fatigue, so you get another coffee. By evening, your body finally asks for fuel, and you feel intense hunger. You're eating late, scrolling late, and sleeping lightly.

Nothing dramatic happened, yet your nervous system never felt safe enough to power down.

This is how chronic stress builds. Not through emergencies, but through constant stimulation and lack of recovery.

Interrupting the Stress Cycle



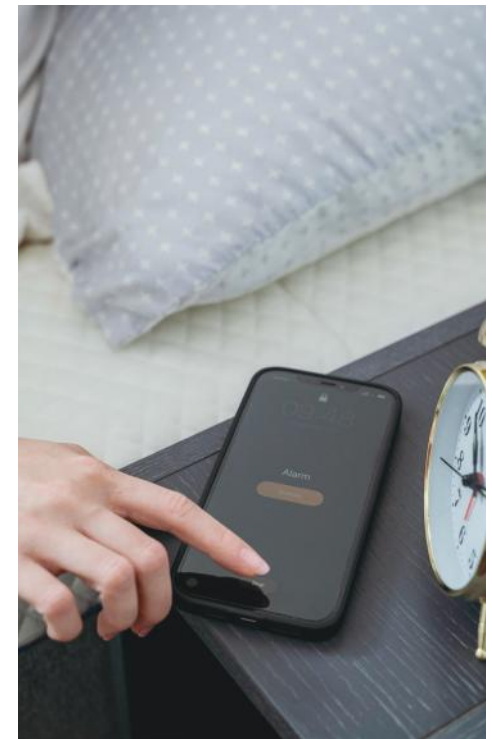
The solution is not willpower. It is interruption.

- Eating early, to prevent cortisol from compensating for low blood sugar
- Eating enough, so the body does not rely on stress hormones for energy

- Creating pauses, throughout the day to signal nervous system safety
- Reducing stimulation before bed, to allow deeper sleep and recovery
- Giving the body predictable routines, which reduce baseline stress load

When the nervous system is supported, energy becomes steadier. Focus improves. Sleep deepens. The body stops bracing for the next hit. For more guidance on nervous system regulation and stress recovery, follow @balancedbymonica on Instagram.

**Monica Uttamchandani is a certified Holistic Health Coach based in the Turks and Caicos Islands. She also consults in person at The Elephant Rooms in Salt Mills, Providenciales.**



# Gender Affairs Department Commemorates International Girls in ICT Day

The Department of Gender Affairs, within the Ministry of Public Safety, Gender and Religious Affairs and Social Welfare, joins the global community in commemorating International Girls in ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) Day, observed annually in April.

This year, this important occasion is being celebrated today, Thursday, 23 April under the theme "AI for Development: Girls Shaping the Digital Future."

This global observance highlights the importance of empowering girls and young women to actively engage in and pursue educational and career opportunities in the technology sector. It also underscores the critical role they play in shaping inclusive, innovative, and

sustainable digital futures, particularly within the rapidly evolving field of artificial intelligence (AI).

In continued support of this work, the Department of Gender Affairs, in partnership with the Ministry of Innovation, Technology and Energy, will host its second annual Secondary School Speech Competition and inaugural Primary School Essay Competition. We also extend special thanks to our many sponsors. These events will take place on Thursday, 30 April 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at Brayton Hall in Providenciales.

Grade Six girls from eight (8) primary schools across Providenciales, Grand Turk, North Caicos and South Caicos have submitted essays to explore the topic: "How does Artificial Intelligence (AI) af-

fect learning and thinking skills in students, and why is it important for students to understand AI?"

Seven secondary schools across Providenciales, North Caicos and South Caicos have officially registered for the Secondary School Speech Competition which will challenge participants to address the timely and critical issue: "Are schools in the Turks and Caicos Islands adequately equipped to provide girls with the opportunities, knowledge, and skills needed to shape the digital future of Artificial Intelligence (AI)?"

Minister responsible for Gender Affairs, Hon. Shaun Malcolm shared, "International Girls in ICT Day serves as an important opportunity to inspire girls across the Turks and Caicos Islands to pursue

pathways in the rapidly evolving technology sector.

"This year's theme reinforces the message that innovation is most impactful when girls are fully included in areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, coding, and digital leadership. When girls are equipped with the tools and opportunities to engage in technology, communities progress and the nation grows stronger."

The Department of Gender Affairs invites schools, stakeholders, and members of the public to attend and support its Girls in ICT Day event on Thursday, 30 April at 10:00 a.m., at Brayton Hall, Providenciales, as we collectively work to inspire the next generation of female leaders in technology and innovation.



*Brianna Walcott making her presentation at the UN ECOSOC Youth Forum*



# Brianna Walcott Represents TCI at United Nations ECOSOC Youth Forum

Youth leader Brianna Walcott concluded her engagement at the ECOSOC Youth Forum, held between April 14 and 16, 2026 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

Representing the Turks and Caicos Islands as part of a Caribbean youth delegation, she delivered a strong call for more equitable, coordinated, and action-driven partnerships.

Convened under the theme “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda and its SDGs for a sustainable future for all,” the Forum brought together youth leaders, Member States, and global partners to accelerate progress on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, with particular emphasis on Goals 6, 7, 9, 11, and 17.

Walcott joined representatives from across the Caribbean, including The Bahamas, Antigua and Barbuda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Barbados, Jamaica, and Guyana, collectively amplifying a unified regional voice on the priorities and realities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

During the Caribbean Regional Breakout Session on SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals, she delivered a clear and urgent message on the role of collaboration in SIDS development.

“For Small Island Developing States, partnerships are not a policy choice; they are the difference between vulnerability and resilience, and between stagnation

and sustainable progress,” she stated, grounding global development discourse in the lived realities of Caribbean communities.

Her contribution was informed by both lived experience and sustained engagement in youth development. Walcott serves as Immediate Past President of the Rotaract Club of Providenciales, is a member of the Caribbean Philanthropic Alliance, and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Youth Development Work at the University of the West Indies. Over the past five years, her leadership has focused on strengthening cross-sector partnerships with government agencies, civil society, and community stakeholders to advance initiatives in literacy, environmental sustainability, youth empowerment, and community resilience.

Through this work, she has emphasized that impact depends on moving beyond formal partnerships toward shared design, implementation, and accountability, while addressing persistent barriers such as unequal power dynamics, fragmented approaches, and weak accountability systems. She also pointed to regional examples such as the Juvenile Prevention and Intervention Council (Turks and Caicos) and HANWASH as demonstrations of how structured, inclusive collaboration can transform fragmented efforts into lasting, systems-based impact.

Following the Forum, Walcott reinforced the urgency of translating dialogue into implementa-

tion.

“Too often, youth are engaged at the level of consultation without being included in decision-making,” she said. “Meaningful partnership requires shared power, shared responsibility, and shared accountability. Action must go beyond conversation.”

Reflecting on the experience, she described it as both grounding and affirming in her work in youth development and advocacy. She expressed pride in representing the Turks and Caicos Islands on a global platform and gratitude for the opportunity to contribute to critical discussions.

She further highlighted the challenge of siloed approaches, despite the inherently interconnected nature of the Sustainable Development Goals. For Small Island Developing States such as the Turks and Caicos Islands, she noted that limited resources and shared vulnerabilities make coordination not optional, but essential.

She stressed that progress depends on shifting away from fragmented efforts toward deeper, more intentional collaboration. For small nations, collective action remains critical to addressing development challenges and building long-term resilience.

She also called for a deliberate shift toward co-creation, positioning young people as equal partners in shaping policy, budgeting, and national development planning, supported by structured investment and formal pathways

for participation in governance.

While in New York, the Caribbean delegation also engaged in a high-level dialogue with Ambassador Leslie Wade, CARICOM Permanent Observer to the United Nations. Ambassador Wade commended the delegation’s contributions and encouraged the young leaders to remain strategic and steadfast advocates for Small Island Developing States, underscoring the importance of sustained Caribbean representation in global decision-making spaces. Walcott’s involvement marks an important milestone, representing the second time the Turks and Caicos Islands has participated in the ECOSOC Youth Forum. This continued engagement reflects the country’s growing visibility in international development spaces and reinforces its commitment to youth leadership and its expanding role in global sustainable development discourse.

Her involvement was supported by FLOW TCI, whose investment demonstrates a strong commitment to youth empowerment, leadership development, and the elevation of Caribbean voices within international development arenas.

As the international community advances toward the 2030 Agenda, Walcott’s message remains clear: partnerships must translate into measurable action, and youth must be positioned not at the margins, but at the center of designing and delivering the future.



## Grace Bay Resorts Foundation, Graceway Communities Collaborate on “Trash to Treasure” Earth Day Competition

In celebration of Earth Day, Grace Bay Resorts Foundation, in partnership with Graceway Communities, hosted its impactful “Trash to Treasure” initiative—an event designed to promote sustainability, creativity, and environmental awareness among the next generation.

This year’s initiative brought together students from Enid Capron Primary School, The International School of Turks and Caicos, and Ashley’s Learning Center, each showcasing innovative projects created from recycled and upcycled materials. The event highlighted how everyday waste can be transformed into functional, educational, and artistic pieces across categories such as science, home appliances, and decorative design.

Adding to the excitement of the day, the competition featured three winners across three categories. Judges evaluated entries based on creativity, use of recycled materials, transformation, craftsmanship, aesthetic appeal, functionality, story, and presentation. Winners received special prizes, while all students were surprised with additional recognitions that filled the day with joy and enthusiasm, celebrating both their achievements and their commitment to sustainability.

Students from The International School demonstrated their environmental stewardship through initiatives such as their Eco-Warriors club, gardening programs,

and energy-saving practices integrated into their curriculum.

“We are so grateful to Grace Bay Resorts Foundation and Graceway Communities for this event. At The International School, we emphasize the importance of growth, responsibility, and being part of positive change. At the same time, the school actively nurtures that passion,” said Iman Rudi-Bonotti, Vice Principal of The International School. “We are proud to be a Green Flag school, and we teach our students that there is no Planet B, so it’s our responsibility to protect the environment, especially here in the beautiful Turks and Caicos.”

From Enid Capron Primary School, Grade 6 teacher Natalie Watson Robinson emphasized how sustainability is already embedded in student life. “Through our Farming in Schools and Greening of Schools projects under the Ministry of Education, our students are consistently engaged in environmental activities. Many of them already had projects prepared before the competition was even announced,” she shared. “They are passionate about protecting the environment not just for themselves, but for future generations.”

At Ashley’s Learning Center, students presented a diverse collection of upcycled crafts, including wall art made from popsicle sticks, burlap, pistachio shells, and other repurposed materials. Princi-

pal Michelle Ricardo Benson highlighted the importance of inclusion in sustainability efforts. “Through hands-on activities like recycling crafts and gardening, our students learn the value of caring for their environment. Opportunities like this reinforce what we teach every day, and they truly enjoy being part of it,” she said.

Speaking on behalf of the organizing partners, Sanajah Forbes, Board Member of Graceway Communities, underscored the broader impact of collaboration. “When local entities come together, the impact is magnified. The Trash to Treasure initiative is a powerful educational tool it shifts the perception of waste from garbage to resource while promoting creativity, sustainability, and community pride.”

She added that Graceway Community’s involvement reflects a deeper commitment to the Turks and Caicos Islands. “It’s about being an active partner in building a sustainable future and setting a standard for how organizations can support grassroots environmental initiatives.”

Adding to this sentiment, Jessica Frattolillo, Chairperson of the Grace Bay Resorts Foundation and Director of Sustainable Operations at Grace Bay Resorts, stated: “Trash to Treasure is more than an Earth Day event, it’s a reflection of our commitment to sustainability. Seeing students transform waste into meaningful,

creative, and practical pieces reminds us that environmental awareness starts with education and imagination. When we invest in our youth, we invest in a more sustainable future for the islands.” She added her gratitude, thanking the sponsors, schools, and judges for their dedication and time. “The students truly showcased their absolute best today, and we are deeply grateful to the wider Turks and Caicos community for always being so open and supportive of allowing us to display sustainability practices.”

The Grace Bay Resorts Foundation also extends sincere thanks to the event judges: Norm Rogers, a dedicated community member known for his daily clean-up efforts across the island; Lauren Bristow, Interior Designer at Grace Bay Resorts; and Davidson Louis, Marketing Coordinator at Sotheby’s International Realty. Their time, expertise, and thoughtful evaluation played an essential role in recognizing the creativity, effort, and environmental awareness demonstrated by each student participant.

The Trash to Treasure event continues to serve as a platform for young minds to innovate while reinforcing the importance of environmental responsibility across the community. Through this initiative Grace Bay Resorts Foundation and Graceway Communities are helping to cultivate a culture of sustainability that will shape the future of the islands.



# Researchers use milk-derived nanoparticles to target aggressive bile duct cancer

Mayo Clinic researchers have developed a promising new way to deliver treatment directly to cholangiocarcinoma tumors, a rare and aggressive bile duct cancer with limited treatment options, using milk-derived nanoparticles that act like guided delivery vehicles.

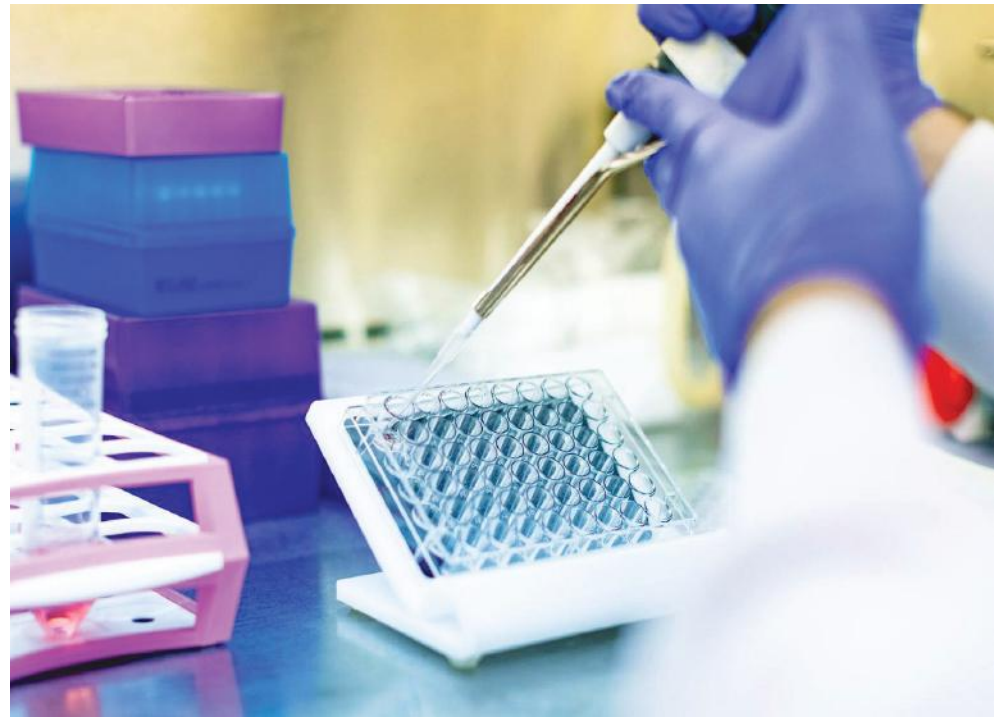
The findings, published in *JHEP Reports*, point to a potential targeted genetic therapy designed to attack cancer cells while sparing healthy tissue.

“One significant issue is the lack of medications that treat the specific alterations in these cancers,” says Rory Smoot, M.D., surgical oncologist at Mayo Clinic in Rochester and senior author of the study. “Our approach is designed to turn off specific cancer-driving genes while leaving healthy tissue alone.”

The team screened a vast library of 600 trillion random DNA molecules to find those that could selectively bind to the surface of cancer cells. Using a technique called

Cell-SELEX, they discovered a short DNA strand, known as an aptamer, that works like a molecular homing device, enabling it to find and attach to cholangiocarcinoma cells. That homing device was attached to tiny, fat-based particles made from milk, previously developed by Tushar Patel, M.B., Ch.B., a transplant hepatologist and researcher at Mayo Clinic in Florida, as a biocompatible way to carry treatments through the body. These milk-derived nanoparticles were loaded with siRNA and outfitted with the tumor-targeting aptamer, enabling direct delivery of genetic therapy into cancer cells. “We showed that this system could deliver gene-silencing therapy straight to the cancer,” says Brandon Wilbanks, Ph.D., postdoctoral research fellow at Mayo Clinic and first author of the study. “This led to decreases in cancer growth and an increase in cancer cell death, without harming nearby healthy tissues.”

While the findings are preclinical, the technology has been patented by Mayo Clinic,



and researchers are now working to optimize gene targets and test the approach across multiple forms of cholangiocarcinoma. The long-term goal is to develop patient-specific gene therapies delivered via this milk-derived platform to improve outcomes for patients.

“These advances bring real hope,” says Dr. Smoot. “They show that it may be possible to develop safer, more personalized treatments for patients who currently have very limited options.”

This research was funded by the Mayo Clinic RNA Discovery and Translation Program, the Mayo Clinic Department of Surgery, the Mayo Clinic Hepatobiliary SPORE NCI, the Mayo Clinic Center for Cell Signaling in Gastroenterology, JSPS KAKENHI Fostering Joint International Research, and the University of Wisconsin Biology of Aging and Age-Related Diseases.

The researchers report no conflicts of interest. Review the study for a complete list of authors, disclosures and funding.

# Endometriosis: Breaking the silence on a misunderstood disease

Every year, Endometriosis Awareness Month shines a light on a condition that affects millions of women worldwide, yet remains widely misunderstood. Endometriosis is more than just ‘bad period pain’; it is a chronic and often debilitating illness that can significantly impact a person’s quality of life.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), endometriosis is a disease in which tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus. This tissue can be found on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, and other areas within the pelvis. Unlike normal menstrual tissue, which leaves the body during a period, this misplaced tissue has no way to exit. As a result, it becomes trapped, leading to inflammation, severe pain, and the formation of scar tissue. Over time, this can interfere with normal bodily functions and even affect fertility.

The WHO estimates that endometriosis affects about one in 10 women and girls of reproductive age globally, making it a significant public health issue.

Endometriosis presents differently in each person, which is one reason it is often difficult to diagnose. Common symptoms include severe menstrual cramps, chronic pelvic pain, heavy or irregular periods, pain during or after intercourse, and difficulty becoming pregnant.

Some individuals may experience mild symptoms, while others face intense,

life-disrupting pain. In some cases, there may be no noticeable symptoms at all. Although there is currently no cure for endometriosis, treatments are available to help manage symptoms and improve quality of life.

Doctors often recommend pain relief medications, such as anti-inflammatory drugs, to reduce discomfort. Hormonal treatments, including birth control pills or hormonal devices, can help regulate or suppress the menstrual cycle, slowing the growth of endometrial-like tissue.

In more severe cases, surgery may be required to remove the abnormal tissue. For those struggling with infertility, assisted reproductive technologies such as in vitro fertilisation may be an option. The WHO stresses that treatment should be tailored to each individual, depending on their symptoms, age, and personal health goals.

## CHALLENGES

Behind the medical facts are real people whose lives are deeply affected by the condition. Their experiences reveal not just physical pain, but emotional strain, social isolation, and the frustration of not being believed.

“The pain isn’t just during my period, it can come at any time. It feels like something inside me is being pulled and twisted. There are days when I can’t walk upright, and I have to plan my entire life around the possibility of pain,” said An-

drea Wright.

Wright said she spent years going from doctor to doctor, being told it was just bad cramps or stress. “At one point, I started to question myself; maybe I was exaggerating. Getting a diagnosis finally validated what I had been feeling all along,” she said.

People, she said, do not see what’s happening inside your body, so they assume you are fine. “I have had to cancel work, miss school, and withdraw from social events, and it’s hard to explain that to others without feeling judged,” Wright said.

“The fatigue is just as hard as the pain. It’s not normal tiredness; it’s exhaustion that doesn’t go away with rest. It affects my ability to focus, to work, and even to enjoy the things I love,” she added.

Medical professionals emphasise that endometriosis is often under-diagnosed and misunderstood, even within healthcare systems. From a clinical standpoint, one of the biggest challenges is recognising the condition early.

Doctors explain that diagnosis often requires a combination of patient history, imaging, and sometimes minimally invasive surgery, such as laparoscopy, to confirm the presence of endometrial-like tissue.

“When I was told it might affect my ability to have children, it was devastating. Endometriosis doesn’t just affect your body, it

affects your plans, your relationships, and your sense of the future,” Wright said.

“Surgery helped, but it wasn’t a cure. The symptoms can come back, and that uncertainty is something you learn to live with every day,” she added.

Healthcare providers also stress the importance of listening to patients and validating their experiences. In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the need for better training, research, and public education around endometriosis. Doctors continue to advocate for earlier diagnosis, improved treatment options, and a more compassionate approach to care.

Endometriosis is often overlooked or misdiagnosed, partly because conversations about menstrual health are still considered taboo in many societies. Raising awareness is essential to breaking these barriers.

Improved awareness can lead to earlier diagnosis, better treatment options, and stronger support systems for those affected. It also encourages open conversations about reproductive health, helping to reduce stigma and misinformation.

Endometriosis is a serious and life-altering condition that deserves greater attention and understanding. By listening to the experiences of those affected and incorporating insights from healthcare professionals, society can take meaningful steps towards better care and support.

# SHEDELY CONSTANT WINS 2026 TCI TOP MODEL FAN FAVOURITE CHALLENGE

The people have spoken! With an impressive 1,020 combined likes and shares, **Shedely Constant** (Contestant #4) has been officially named the 2026 TCI Top Model Fan Favourite in this year's spirited social media challenge.

Running from 15–21 April, the Fan Favourite Challenge invited the public to support their favourite contestants by engaging with posts on the official @tcistopmodel Instagram and Facebook pages. Each like and share counted as a vote, highlighting contestant popularity, digital reach and strong community support.

As the top vote-getter, Shedely wins gift certificates to **Crackpot Kitchen** and **Equilibrium Spa**, a prize package that pairs culinary flair with wellness luxury, offering a celebratory night out and a rejuvenating spa experience to match his rising star power in the local fashion and entertainment scene.

**Courtney Robinson**, Founder and Executive Producer, said, "Shedely's victory shows the transformative power of community and creativity. Our fans did more than vote — they championed talent, amplified voices, and sustained momentum. We're proud of their passion and the impact their engagement has had on advancing emerging models for years."

The journey continues toward the Grand Finale of Cycle 7 on Saturday, May 2, 2026, at Brayton Hall, Providenciales. Expect an unforgettable evening of fashion and performance as the Face of the Turks and Caicos and the TCI Top Model 2026, is named.



*Shedely Constant*

# Michael Jackson streams skyrocket following biopic release

Michael Jackson once sang Don't Stop 'Til You Get Enough, and fans appear to be taking that advice to heart. Streaming of his catalogue in the US surged 95 per cent over the weekend compared with the same period the previous week. The spike comes according to Luminate, an industry data and analytics firm that tracks shifts in music listening behaviour. The boost appears linked to the release of Michael, the big-budget Michael Jackson biopic, which debuted in theatres last Friday. The film earned an estimated US\$97 million in its

opening weekend in the US and Canada, according to studio figures.

Earlier projections had placed the film's opening closer to US\$50 million, later revised upward to about US\$70 million in the weeks leading up to release.

As a result of the movie's popularity, Jackson received 31.7 million streams on Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25 in the US and 16.3 million streams the previous weekend, Friday, April 17 and Saturday, April 18. That's a 95 per cent increase.

But before Michael Jackson was



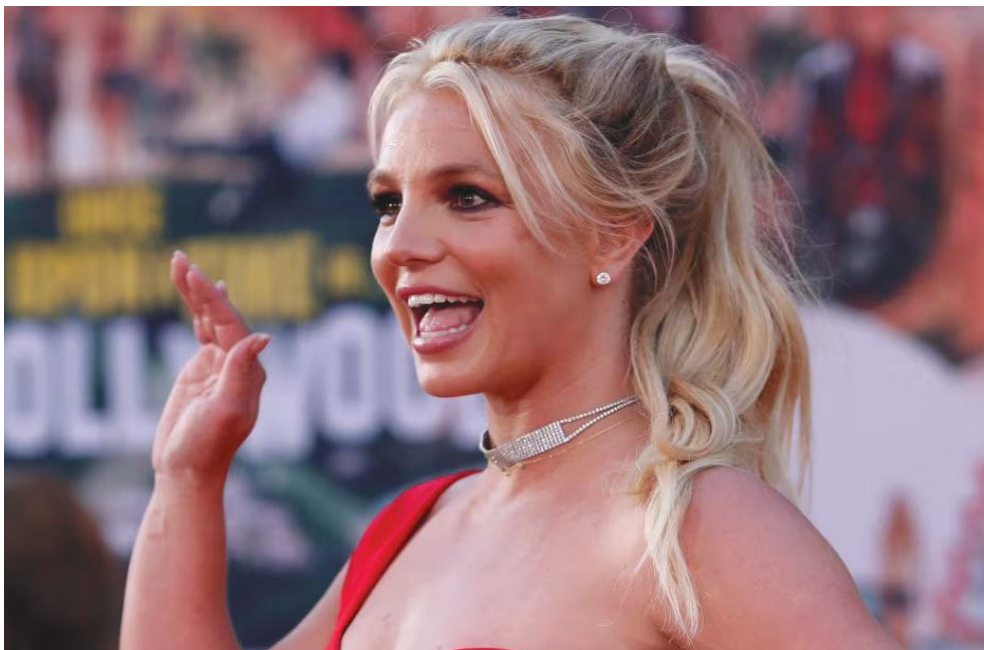
This image released by Lionsgate shows Jaafar Jackson as Michael Jackson in a scene from 'Michael'.

the 'King of Pop', he was the youngest member of The Jackson 5. The classic boy group also received a huge jump in streams. The group earned 2.4 million streams on Friday, April 24 and Saturday, April 25 compared to 1.3 million streams the previous weekend.

Jackson also saw a boost in plays on Apple Music. According to the streaming giant, on Mon-

day, Jackson had eight songs on Apple Music's Daily Top 100 Global Chart. Billie Jean led the pack at number 11.

And Shazam found that Jackson streams were 140 per cent higher in volume last weekend, April 24 through April 26, than the previous weekend. As a result, there are currently seven Jackson songs on Shazam's global top 200.



Britney Spears arrives at the Los Angeles premiere of "Once Upon a Time in Hollywood," on July 22, 2019.

Britney Spears was charged in California on Thursday with driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol, authorities said.

The 44-year-old pop star was charged with a single misdemeanour count of driving under the combined influence of alcohol and at least one drug, the Ventura County District Attorney's Office said.

A Spears representative had no immediate comment.

The criminal complaint does not specify what kind of alcohol or

drugs, or what amount, Spears is accused of having used.

Spears, who has since entered substance abuse treatment, was arrested March 4 after she was pulled over for driving her black BMW fast and erratically on US 101 near her home, the California Highway Patrol said.

She appeared to be impaired, took a series of field sobriety tests, was arrested on suspicion of driving under the influence of a combination of alcohol and drugs and was taken to a Ventu-

## Britney Spears charged with driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs

ra County jail, the CHP said. She was released on bail the following day. Police completed their investigation and presented it to prosecutors on March 23.

A representative at the time called Spears' actions "completely inexcusable" and said it would ideally be "the first step in long overdue change that needs to occur in Britney's life."

Spears voluntarily checked into a substance abuse treatment facility just over a month after the arrest, her representative said. Spears' arraignment is set for Monday. Because it is a misdemeanour charge, she will not be required to appear in court, prosecutors said.

Prosecutors said the case will be handled according to their standard protocol for defendants with no DUI history, no crash or injury on the road and a low blood-alcohol level.

In court on Monday, Spears will be offered what is commonly known as a "wet reckless," allowing a defendant to plead guilty and get a year of probation, credit for any time served in jail, a required DUI class and state-mandated fines and fees, prosecutors said.

The offer is common especially for defendants who have independently shown motivation to address their problems and seek treatment, the district attorney's office said.



Dr. Lisa Indar, Executive Director, CARPHA signed the International Cargo Rate Agreement with Mr. Brian Broomes, Head of Sales, Caribbean Airlines Limited at the CARPHA Headquarters, in St. Clair, Trinidad.

# CARPHA and Caribbean Airlines Partner to Improve Laboratory Sample Transport Across the Caribbean

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and Caribbean Airlines Limited (CAL) on April 17, 2026, formally signed an International Cargo Rate Agreement that establishes standardised and preferential international cargo rates for the shipment of public health specimens.

The agreement is improving the efficiency, equity and timeliness of laboratory referral across CARPHA Member States (MS), thereby improving regional health security through the provision of more timely laboratory information for public health action.

The agreement was signed by CARPHA Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Indar, and Caribbean Airlines' Head of Sales, Cargo Division, Mr. Brian Broomes, on behalf of CAL. It addresses long standing challenges that have affected the movement of specimen from CARPHA's 26 diverse geographically located MS to CARPHA for specialised testing, including cost disparities between countries and logistical barriers that can delay sample referral and disrupt surveillance activities. It also supports the improved transportation of samples to CARPHA's three referral laboratories in Trinidad, St Lucia and Jamaica, now offering expanded clinical and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) testing, and rapid PCR testing of isolates from clinical, environment and animal sources. In addition, CARPHA's Pandemic Fund project will cover

the cost of sample transport initially.

By improving predictability and affordability in international specimen shipment, the agreement supports timely diagnosis of priority diseases, strengthens continuity of surveillance, and enhances outbreak detection and response for emerging and re-emerging pathogens. All shipments are conducted with safe and secure transport practices in keeping with international packaging and safety standards for infectious substances. Speaking at the signing, CARPHA's Executive Director, Dr. Lisa Indar, remarked: "Strong laboratory referral systems are essential to regional health security. This agreement with Caribbean Airlines supports faster, more reliable movement of specimens for specialised testing, helping our Member States to strengthen surveillance and respond more quickly to public health threats. It is a practical partnership that advances equity in access to advanced diagnostics across the Caribbean and also demonstrates CAL's commitment to a healthier, safer Caribbean".

Dr. Gabriel Gonzalez-Escobar, Head of the CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory (CMML), emphasised the operational impact of the arrangement on laboratory systems. "In public health, time matters. When specimens can be shipped more efficiently and at predictable rates, national



(L-R) Dr. Mark Sami, CARPHA Director; Dr. Lisa Indar, CARPHA Executive Director; Mr. Brian Broomes, Head of Sales, Caribbean Airlines Limited and Dr. Gabriel Escobar, Head – CMML, CARPHA

laboratories are better able to refer samples for specialised testing and maintain continuity of surveillance. This agreement strengthens the laboratory referral network and supports timely detection and response, particularly during outbreaks and for priority pathogens" he remarked.

Caribbean Airlines' Head of Sales Cargo, Mr Brian Broomes stated: "Caribbean Airlines is proud to partner with CARPHA on this important initiative. By providing a structured, reliable and secure cargo solution, we are supporting the timely transfer of critical samples to CARPHA's laboratories, which

is essential for effective testing and surveillance. This collaboration reflects our commitment to strengthening regional connectivity in a way that supports public health systems and contributes to the safety and well-being of communities across the Caribbean".

CARPHA works with its 26 Member States to strengthen laboratory capacity, surveillance, and coordinated response systems across the region. The CARPHA Medical Microbiology Laboratory (CMML) plays a key role in specialised testing and supports national laboratories through referral services and regional laboratory coordination.



CARPHA Advanced Food Safety in Belize

# CARPHA Strengthens Capacity in Belize to Advance Early Warning Surveillance and Response and Healthier, Safer Tourism

The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) of Belize, delivered targeted capacity building initiatives including advanced food safety and certification training, visitor-based and mass gathering surveillance and strengthening multisectoral stakeholder partnerships to build multisectoral capacity in Early Warning Surveillance and Response as well as Healthier, Safer Tourism.

Ten (10) data-entry tablets, equipped with the CARPHA surveillance tools such as Tourism and Health Information System (THiS), Mass Gathering Surveillance System (MGSS), Caribbean Vessel Surveillance System (CVSS), Regional Integrated Early Warning Surveillance System (RIEWSS) and DHIS2 were officially handed over to the Chief Executive Officer of the MOHW, Dr. Julio Sabido and Director of Health Services, Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa for distribution across various districts in Belize to support real-time surveillance, data collection and laboratory reporting. This investment is expected to significantly strengthen the country's ability to detect, monitor and respond to public health threats efficiently. This three-day mission in Belize, from April 13-15, 2026, was conducted by a five-member CARPHA delegation



CARPHA Tablets Handover in Belize

led by Dr. Lisa Indar, CARPHA Executive Director (ED), together with Dr. Sastee Kisoondan, Senior Technical Officer-Planning & Coordination in the Office of the ED, Mr. Keston Daniel, Coordinator, Regional Tourism and Health Program (THP), Ms. Samantha Llanos, Epidemiologist, Visitor Based Surveillance, and Ms. Frieda Mohamed, Training & Standards Officer, THP.

At the Opening Ceremony of the Advanced Food Safety Training and the

Joint Media Conference, Dr. Indar, Executive Director emphasised the importance of building national capacity in food safety and public health preparedness, noting that initiatives like these are critical to protecting both residents and visitors, particularly during large-scale national events, highlighting, "Food Safety is crucial and what is important, is that food is safe for consumption. This is the work CARPHA is doing, equipping persons with the necessary knowledge to en-

sure food safety".

Dr. Laura Friesen, Deputy Director, Health Services, MOHW shared, "We are very grateful for the presence of the Executive Director of CARPHA and the team who have come to work with both tourism and health. Belize is highly dependent on tourism and the Advanced Food Safety Training will empower our food safety providers and the Ministry of Health staff to ensure that the food that is consumed and sold in public places is safe for the local population and visitors".

Key achievements for enhancing Belize's capacity for enhanced readiness and response to public health threats included high level advocacy, strategic and planning discussions through engagements with senior officials from the MOHW, Ministry of Tourism, Youth, Sports and Diaspora Relations and Belize Tourism Board on strengthening intersectoral collaboration and enhancing health security measures, particularly in anticipation of mass gatherings such as the National Agriculture and Trade Show.

Discussion revolved around implementation of CARPHA's electronic early warning systems (EWS)-CVSS, MGSS and THiS to support real time notification, coordinated response and overall enhanced public health response to safeguard the health and safety of both locals and visitors.

# Grange doubles down on claim Rastafarians' rights are protected in Jamaica

Culture Minister Olivia Grange has doubled down on the Government's position that Rastafarians rights are already protected under Jamaican law, rejecting criticism from the Rastafari Mansions and Organizations (RMO). According to Grange, members of the Rastafari faith enjoy the same constitutional rights as other religious groups. Speaking on Thursday during a meeting of the joint select committee reviewing the Green Paper on the National Policy for Culture, Entertainment and the Creative Economy, Grange said recent public discussions had created a misleading impression that Rastafarians lacked recognition or equal protections under the law in Jamaica.

"There has been several comments in the newspapers recently on Rastafari and what Government is doing or is not doing and if we have recognised Rastafarians...and if they have the same rights as any other religion, and I just want to place on record that they do have the same rights," Grange said. The minister maintained that those protections are guaranteed under Jamaica's Charter of Rights, as she argued that the current Administration has done more than any previous Government to support and embrace the Rastafari community.



Jamaica's Culture Minister Olivia Grange

Grange also pointed to the Government's \$176-million contribution to the Coral Gardens Benevolent Fund, established following the State's apology for the 1963 Coral Gardens atrocity against Rastafari.

Her comments came days after the RMO accused the Government of overstating the legal protections afforded to Rastafari and renewed calls for a comprehensive Rastafari Rights

and Justice Act to address what it described as systemic discrimination.

The issue has gained renewed attention following legislation in St Kitts and Nevis formally recognising Rastafari, including provisions relating to sacramental rights, identity, and economic concessions, prompting comparisons with Jamaica's legal framework and fresh calls from the RMO for explicit constitutional recognition.

In its statement released on April 21, the RMO argued that constitutional guarantees of religious freedom do not amount to formal legal recognition of Rastafari as a distinct faith and indigenous cultural group.

The organisation said the absence of explicit protections has allowed discrimination and inconsistent enforcement to persist across policing, education, employment, and health care.

The group also accused the Government of failing to adequately support Rastafari communities affected by Hurricane Melissa, saying relief efforts did not sufficiently account for their dietary, cultural, and health practices. It further cited several recent ganja-related cases, arguing that Rastafari sacramental rights continue to be inconsistently applied despite amendments to the Dangerous Drugs Act.

Grange, however, signalled that the Government remains open to broader discussions on Rastafari and its place within Jamaica's legal and cultural framework.

"I would invite full discussion on Rastafari as a religion and to look at the history to see what has been done in this country and to chart a path forward, and even further embracing and recognising the importance of Rastafari," she said on Thursday.

# Families of Canada school shooting victims sue OpenAI over shooter's use of ChatGPT

The families of victims of a school shooting in a Canadian Rockies town are suing artificial intelligence company OpenAI in US federal court, seeking to hold the ChatGPT maker responsible for failing to alert police to the shooter's alarming interactions with the chatbot.

A lawsuit filed Wednesday on behalf of 12-year-old Maya Gebala, who was critically injured in the February shooting, is among the first of dozens of cases that families in Tumbler Ridge, British Columbia are planning with claims alleging wrongful death, negligence and product liability.

Plaintiffs' attorney Jay Edelson said in an interview that decisions made by OpenAI and its CEO Sam Altman "have destroyed the town.

The people are really resilient, but what happened is unimaginable."

Altman sent a letter last week formally apologizing to the community that his company did not notify law enforcement about the shooter's online behaviour.

Authorities have said the shooter killed



her mother and 11-year-old stepbrother in their home on February 10 before opening fire at the nearby Tumbler Ridge Secondary School, killing five

children and an educator before killing herself. Twenty-five people were also injured in the attack, Canada's deadliest mass shooting in years.

The case highlights concerns about the harms posed by overly agreeable AI chatbots and what obligations the tech industry has to control them or notify authorities about planned violence by chatbot users.

This month, prosecutors investigating the deaths of two University of South Florida doctoral students said that the suspect asked ChatGPT about body disposal in the lead-up to the students' disappearance.

In response to the lawsuit, OpenAI said in a written statement that the "events in Tumbler Ridge are a tragedy. We have a zero-tolerance policy for using our tools to assist in committing violence."

"As we shared with Canadian officials, we have already strengthened our safeguards, including improving how ChatGPT responds to signs of distress, connecting people with local support and mental health resources, strengthening how we assess and escalate potential threats of violence, and improving detection of repeat policy violators," the company said.

# TCI LANDS LANDMARK CONCACAF C LICENSE CONVENTION STATUS

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*Sonia Fulford (seated at centre), is flanked by CONCACAF and local football officials, including Dane Ritchie (seated at far left) . Technical Director for the local Football Programme share in a photo moment with recipients of the C License Coach Certification, other members of the local administration.*

**SEE PG32**

# Seven Schools Register as TCIFA Launches Historic U8 & U10 Girls Football League

By Vivian Tyson NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

A total of seven primary schools has already registered for a groundbreaking youth competition set to transform the landscape of girls' football in the Turks and Caicos Islands. Elite Primary, Enid Capron Primary, Iris Stubbs Primary, Oseta Jolly Primary, Mills Institute, Thelma Lightbourne Primary, and Ona Ginton Primary are the early entrants in the Under-8 and Under-10 Girls Football Competition being organized by the Turks and Caicos Islands Football Association (TCIFA) in collaboration with FIFA.

The initiative, which targets girls between the ages of 7 and 10, is designed to create meaningful opportunities for young female players to engage in organized football while fostering enjoyment, teamwork, and early skill development.

The competition is scheduled to kick off on Saturday, May 23, 2026, in Providenciales, beginning with an opening ceremony followed by the first slate of matches. Games will be played primarily on Saturdays, with additional fixtures scheduled during the week.



*The programme underscores TCIFA's ongoing efforts to grow women's football at the grassroots level*

A major highlight of the programme is the involvement of FIFA, which will send a technical expert to conduct a three-day coaching workshop from

May 7 to May 9. The training sessions will prepare teachers and coaches to effectively guide their teams, ensuring that participants benefit from

structured, high-quality instruction.

TCIFA has also committed to providing significant support to participating schools. Each team will receive footballs for training, official uniforms, and transportation assistance for inter-island travel where necessary. Coaches, particularly those from the outer islands, will be fully supported with travel, accommodation, and meals during the workshop period.

Schools are required to nominate one coach per age group, and organizers are encouraging the inclusion of female coaches to strengthen representation within the sport.

The programme underscores TCIFA's ongoing efforts to grow women's football at the grassroots level, creating a pathway for young players to develop and thrive in the game.

With registration still open and enthusiasm building, the upcoming competition is expected to deliver a lively and inspiring atmosphere for players, coaches, and supporters alike, marking an important step forward for the future of girls' football in the Turks and Caicos Islands.

## Registration Opens for Annual Salt Rakers' Corporate Open Water Swim Meet

The Salt Rakers Aquatic Club is set to host its highly anticipated 2nd Annual Corporate Open Water Swimming Competition on Saturday, August 8, 2026, at Rickie's Flamingo Café in Grace Bay, Providenciales.

The event, which continues to grow in popularity, will bring together swimmers from across the corporate community and

beyond for a day of endurance, teamwork, and aquatic excellence in the pristine waters of the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Participants will compete in three race categories: 2K, 1K, and 500 meters, offering options for both seasoned swimmers and newcomers eager to test their skills in open water conditions.

The competition is scheduled to begin at 8:30 a.m., with organizers encouraging early arrival to ensure a smooth start and proper event coordination.

The Salt Rakers Aquatic Club is calling on companies, teams, and individual swimmers to take part in the exciting challenge, promoting fitness, camaraderie, and community engagement.

Interested participants and sponsors can get more information or register by contacting the organizers at (649) 241-1272 or via email at [saltrakers@gmail.com](mailto:saltrakers@gmail.com)

With its scenic beachfront setting and competitive spirit, the event promises to be a highlight on the 2026 sporting calendar in the Turks and Caicos Islands.



# HIGH SCHOOL RUGBY COMPETITION

The Turks and Caicos Islands Rugby Federation staged its High School Competition on Saturday, April 25, at the Meridian Field on Providenciales. The event comprised of male and female competitions. The winners of the round robin match-up have been qualified playoffs in early May. The following are photo highlights of the event.





Academy Eagles FC Collecting their PPL Clausura Champions

# Academy Eagles FC Crowned PPL Clausura Champions with Perfect Season

By Vivian Tyson, NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

Academy Eagles FC were officially crowned champions of the Beaches Resort-sponsored Provo Premier League (PPL) Clausura Round after securing a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Teachers YS in the feature Match #56, completing an outstanding and unbeaten campaign.

Entering the decisive fixture, the Eagles needed a win to guarantee the title, and they wasted little time asserting their dominance. The league leaders struck early in the first half, with forward Wepsdel Saintlus opening the scoring in the 15th minute. Just two minutes later, Jean Innocent doubled the advantage, finishing clinically in the 17th minute to put Academy Eagles firmly in control. Holding a 2-0 lead at halftime, the

Eagles looked poised to close out the match comfortably, but Teachers YS responded with determination in the second half. Their efforts were rewarded in the 57th minute when Genixson Petion converted from the penalty spot to reduce the deficit to 2-1. Despite mounting pressure from Teachers YS in the closing stages, Academy Eagles' defense held firm, demonstrating the composure and resilience that has defined their season.

The match was played with high intensity, reflected in several cautions issued to both teams. Teachers YS had three players booked, while Academy Eagles also received multiple yellow cards. However, the Eagles maintained their focus when it mattered most, seeing out the game to secure all three points and the championship.

Captain Mykerwens Varis delivered a commanding performance and was named Academy Eagles' Player of the Match. He later had the honor of lifting the Clausura trophy, which was presented by Provo Premier League President Patrick Baptiste. For Teachers YS, Bebetho Beauplan was recognized as his team's standout performer.

Earlier in the day, SWA Sharks FC kept their slim title hopes alive with a dominant 6-0 victory over Provo United FC in Match #55. Brian Gregg led the charge for the Sharks with a hat trick, scoring in the 45th, 56th, and 68th minutes, while Jake Maughan, Marc-Edy Longchamp, and Junior Paul also found the back of the net. Despite the emphatic win, the Sharks were ultimately dependent on an Academy Eagles loss, which did not materialize.

Academy Eagles' triumph caps a flawless Clausura campaign, as they finished at the top of the standings with seven wins from seven matches. The team scored freely throughout the competition while maintaining one of the league's strongest defensive records, separating themselves clearly from the rest of the field.

Their consistency, attacking efficiency, and defensive discipline have made them deserving champions and one of the most dominant sides in recent Provo Premier League history.

With the Clausura title secured, Academy Eagles FC have firmly established themselves as the team to beat, completing a perfect season and lifting the Beaches Resort-sponsored PPL trophy in impressive fashion.

# TCI Achieves Landmark Coaching Milestone with CONCACAF C License Convention Status

By Vivian Tyson, NEWSLINE Editor-In-Chief

The Turks and Caicos Islands has reached a historic milestone in football development, becoming one of only a handful of Caribbean nations to achieve CONCACAF C License Convention Status.

The announcement was highlighted during a C License Certification Ceremony hosted by the Turks and Caicos Islands Football Association (TCIFA) on Saturday, April 25, at its Venetian Road headquarters in Providenciales. Fourteen coaches were officially certified, representing cohorts from both 2023 and 2025.

TCIFA President Sonia Fulford described the achievement as a defining moment for the country's football program.

"This is truly a landmark milestone," Fulford said. "We have ceremonies all the time, but there's no ceremony like today. Achieving convention status at the C License level for an association of this size is remarkable." She emphasized that Turks and Caicos now stands alongside only about five Caribbean member associations with similar recognition, placing the nation in elite regional company despite its small size.

"We are a small association in numbers, but we are big in what we do," Fulford added, noting that the accomplishment reflects the collective effort of coaches, staff, and stakeholders committed to football development.

The TCIFA President also challenged newly certified coaches to view their qualification as a responsibility rather than a personal accolade.

"This is not just a certificate to add to your résumé. It is to be put to use, to help build others and strengthen the foundation we've already started," she said. Technical Director Dane Ritchie



President of the TCIFA Sonia Fulford



Dane Ritchie, Technical Director for the TCIFA Programme



From Left, Andre Waugh - Head of Coaching Education, Concacaf; Lenny Lake - Concacaf Coach Developer; and Anton Corneal - Concacaf Coach Educator/Developer

outlined the years-long journey to achieving convention status,

which began as early as 2021. The application process culminated in official approval in December 2025.

"We were proud to see Turks and Caicos listed among 41 CONCACAF countries, ranked 15th," Ritchie said. "For a country of just 45,000 to 50,000 people, that is a significant accomplishment."

He underscored the scale of the achievement by comparing the population to international stadium capacities, reinforcing how far the nation has come in football development.

Head of Coaching Education at CONCACAF, Andre Ward, praised the TCIFA for delivering a program that embodies the true purpose of the coaching convention.

"When we walked into the training environment, it felt world-class," Ward said. "This is what the convention is meant to be, member associations aspiring to excellence."

Ward noted that the coaching convention framework ensures that coaching qualifications are recognized across all 41 CONCACAF member associations, calling it "the great equalizer" for smaller nations.

"Regardless of size, this is something every country can do, and do well," he said. "Coaches are in a privileged position because they change lives."

He encouraged the newly certified coaches to embrace leadership through service and mentorship, emphasizing the lasting impact they can have on future generations.

"There is no success without a successor," Ward concluded.

The ceremony not only celebrated certification but also marked a turning point for football in the Turks and Caicos Islands, signaling a strengthened commitment to coach education, grassroots development, and regional competitiveness.