

TEENTIMES 30

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

JUNE 2025

My hair is Me!

A MESSAGE TO TEENS SUFFERING FROM DEPRESSION

YOU ARE NOT ALONE.

Mental health is a contentious issue today, and many deaths are related to depression, yet most teenagers feel uncomfortable or hopeless talking about it openly. Remember, you are not alone if you're feeling lonely or if you're thinking you are the only one with these feelings. Everyone in life is meant to have ups and downs – some have the strength to bear it, whereas others can't.

When you're depressed, you may think that nobody cares, or no one likes you the way you are. Some people genuinely want to support and help you. You have affected people's lives and they want you to be you. There are times when you are the reason someone smiles. Your feelings are real, they matter, and YOU are truly worthy.

What depression is

Depression is a serious mental health disorder that is not simply feeling sad for a few days, but it affects you in the way you think, feel, and handle your day-to-day activities. It makes simple tasks feel overwhelming and impossible to do. Some common signs of depression are as follows:

- Constantly feeling sad or irritated.
- Loss of interest in the activities you once liked.
- Difficulty sleeping or being sleepy.
- Difficulty making decisions or concentrating.
- Unworthy or certifiable.
- Suicidal thoughts or self-injury.

Don't ignore these symptoms if you see them in yourself. Depression is not a weakness, but a treatable illness and you should improve.

What you can do

It may feel as if no one can understand you, but here are a few things you can do to start feeling better:

- Speak to someone – you don't have to do this alone. You can speak to a family member, friend, counsellor, or teacher whom you feel comfortable with and trust. Sharing with someone can help you feel relief and assure you that it is okay to talk about what's inside you or your feelings. This can be a start to recovery.



- Find professional help – some people specialize in this field and can give you a helping hand when you are not comfortable confronting your family or friends. Therapists, psychologists, and school counsellors are here to help you manage your feelings and figure out how to cope.

- Stay active – stretching, short walks, or meditating can improve your mood and reduce stress.

- Take a break from social media – social media has been a source of commu-

nication for people around the world. Comparing yourself to someone on social media is easy, but not everything seen on social media is true, it's mostly an unrealistic view of people's lives. Taking a break from all these platforms can improve your mental health and help you stay positive about yourself and life.

- Practice self-care – do what makes you feel comfortable, whether it's reading a book, creating art, listening to music, or spending time outdoors. You deserve happiness and peace, and you owe it to

yourself to seek that joy.

- Don't be isolated – even at times when you hear whispers or feel as if being alone and isolated is a better option for you, you are wrong. Try being around people who love you. Having people who care for you or love you makes you feel special and appreciated. Surrounding yourself with love and support can make a world of difference.

Where to seek help

You don't have to face this by yourself, there is help. Here are some suggestions:

- School counsellors – they are there to listen and guide you in the direction of help and improvement.

- Therapists and psychologists – professional therapy can offer strategies to help you cope with your feelings.

- Support groups – sharing with others you don't know, but who understand what you are going through, can be healing and comforting.

If you've reached this far, take this as a sign

Depression may sometimes make you feel as if no one gets you or understands you. Often, we search for understanding, but when we find it, we hesitate, fearing judgment. But the truth is, some people truly care and want to help. Most of the time, we look for others who can understand us, but when we get to know them, we suddenly isolate ourselves thinking they will be the same and won't understand.

You are not alone in this fight. People care about you and you are worthy of love, happiness, and support. If you or someone near you is hurting, please call out. There is no shame in asking for help, you are worthy of healing, and you are worthy of recovering. Don't forget, you are not alone, and you are important.



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Prom Night 2025: Fire & Ice Ignites Magic

Get ready, seniors! Teen Times Prom Night 2025 on Sint Maarten is set to sizzle. Hosted by Teen Times and taking place on Sunday, June 29, from 7:00pm to 1:00am at the stunning Astra Restaurant in Simpson Bay, this year's Prom is shaping up to be unforgettable. Themed Fire & Ice, Prom invites the Class of 2025 to celebrate in style with tickets priced at just \$20 per student.

WHAT MAKES PROM NIGHT SXM SO SPECIAL

Prom Night on St. Maarten has long been the highlight of the senior year, a formal send-off where students of Milton Peters, St. Dominic, St. Maarten Academy, and other schools on the island unite. Traditions like electing a Prom King & Queen, a Prom Court, and awards for "Best Dressed," "Best Entrance," and "Best Couple" add to the excitement.

Every year the theme changes, and while dressing to match is optional, it certainly ups the fun. Expect fire-orange and icy-blue gowns, tuxes with frosty lapels, and bold accessories that bring the theme to life.

FIRE & ICE: A THEME WITH HEART

This year's Fire & Ice theme invites your creativity and energy. Think dramatic contrasts warmth meets cool elegance across decor, lighting, and fashion. Imagine stepping into a room draped in crimson and cobalt accents, with glittering lights dancing like embers and ice crystals overhead. Prom-goers are encouraged to play with colour, texture, and style – but whether you go bold or subtle, the vibe is electric.

VENUE VIBES: ASTRA RESTAURANT, SIMPSON BAY

Astra is an open-air gem set right on the lagoon. Known for its steak, seafood, and laid-back island-chic ambience, it's the perfect backdrop for a summer evening of celebration.

Imagine ending your high school journey with a lagoon breeze and tropical soundtrack under the stars.

NIGHT'S LINE-UP: MUSIC, MEMORIES & MORE

As Prom Night blends nostalgia with celebration, you can expect the following:

- Red carpet entries – ceremonial, stylish, and full of camera ops.
- A professional DJ spinning dance-floor hits – DJ King Kembe!
- A formal crowning of Prom King & Queen, plus royal court titles.
- Photo booths and roaming photographers to capture every moment.

This is not just a dance, it's a memory-in-the-making, and every detail contributes to an atmosphere high school seniors will treasure forever. Bring your energy, your friends, and your best photogenic poses!

WHY PROM NIGHT MATTERS

Prom offers more than a great night out – it's a rite of passage. It's the final chapter of friendship, algae laughter, and hallway confessions, all wrapped in glamour and music. As Teen Times puts it: "Prom is one night where students create a lifetime of memories. We provide venue, music, snacks, ambience. They bring the fun and the Prom spirit."

With 30 years of tradition and growing each year in scale and spirit, Teen Times Prom Night is the island's symbol of youth, unity, and a future brimming with potential.

Prom Night 2025 – Fire & Ice is nearly here! It's your last night as a high school student, your time to shine, to dance, to laugh, and to celebrate everything you've become, alongside friends and memories that will last a lifetime. Let's make this one spectacular.



Feature

Teen Times celebrates Minister Gumbs for championing hair-discrimination reforms

Teen Times applauds Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Melissa Gumbs, for introducing new directives that will curb hair-based discrimination and improve student safety in Sint Maarten's schools.

Minister Gumbs announced that draft regulations in the forthcoming Ordinance on Education Supervision will prohibit schools from excluding students or limiting participation based on hair-style, texture, or length, across all public and subsidized primary and secondary institutions. In her parliamentary remarks, she reinforced that dress codes must respect fundamental student rights and confront the colonial roots of discriminatory grooming policies.

She affirmed that school boards will soon receive compliance guidelines drawing on legal standards and model policies from Barbados, Anguilla, and St. Kitts and Nevis, ensuring equitable access for all, especially black and brown students historically affected by outdated grooming rules.

As the youth-led platform that sparked real change, Teen Times proudly reflects that the road to reform began with its 2024 "Hair Discrimination Prevention Act" proposal and the various advocates on the island who fight hair discrimination. Its submission to MP Sjamira Roseburg

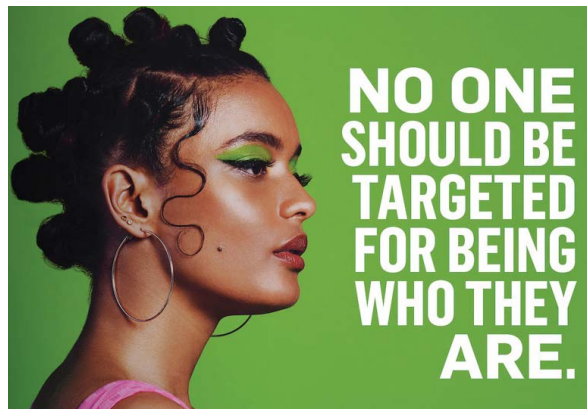
ignited official parliamentary consideration, and the motion passed and was elevated to the Ministry.

In Parliament, Minister Gumbs emphasized that equity in educational access must be upheld for all students. She also addressed safety concerns related to student transportation, committing to enhance oversight and enforce professionalism among contracted drivers.

Minister Gumbs rightly connected dignity in personal expression to safety beyond the classroom: both fundamental to providing a nurturing learning environment.

This development is proof positive that youth voices can shape policy. From assisting in drafting legislation to organizing cultural events, over its 30 years in existence, Teen Times has steered meaningful change, "and we're only getting started".

"Minister Gumbs' leadership demonstrates that when decision-makers listen to young advocates, transformative results follow. We look forward to supporting the Ministry as implementation guidelines roll out, since these measures represent more than regulation, they mark a step toward dismantling colonial-era norms and affirming pride in identity and safety for every student."



What's next?

We will do the following:

- Monitor the release of the Education Supervision Ordinance and compliance guidelines.
- Support school boards as they update dress codes and transportation policies.
- Continue amplifying student stories and experiences through our platform.

"Minister Melissa Gumbs deserves heartfelt recognition for translating youth advocacy into policy that protects student dignity and supports cultural identity. Teen Times celebrates this milestone and reaffirms our role as a youth-led catalyst for all things beneficial for the youth of St. Maarten. Let's continue raising our voices, Together, we are the future."





SUMMER KICK-OFF ON ST. MAARTEN



BY ASANTÉ AND SURAJ

Ladies and gentlemen, the 2024-2025 school year is over and summer break is here! It is time to kick back, relax, and wash off all that school stress with a wave of fun for the summer. You may be thinking to yourself, I want to have fun this summer, but I am not traveling and there is almost nothing to do on the island. Well do not worry, we got you. After reading this article, you will have an amazing idea of how to have an enjoyable fun-filled summer right here at home.

1: Ride the Waves: Watersport Adventures

Water sports on our island St. Maarten are an absolute blast and offer non-stop fun. You can take part in racing across the waves on a jet ski or even jet cars! Furthermore, you can enjoy a peaceful paddle in a kayak or canoe, as the island's warm weather and beautiful beaches make it the perfect playground. These activities are not only fun, but they are also easy to access at some of our island's most beautiful and lively beaches, such as Divi Little Bay, Great Bay, Mullet Bay, and Kim Sha Beach.

2: Cruise in Style: Scenic Boat Rides

Boat rides in St. Maarten are a breath-taking way to experience the island's beauty. Whether you are on a catamaran, a lively party boat, or a sailboat, there is something really special about being on the waters of our island and taking in the amazing views it has in store. Boat rides are not only about views,

you can also enjoy activities via the boat like snorkelling, scuba diving, marine life spotting, and even just jumping into the water for a swim. Boat rides offer fun for families, couples, groups of friends and just about everyone to enjoy. Every boat ride is an unforgettable memory in the making if you make it one.

3: Soak Up the Sun: Stunning Beaches

An island-wide favourite is to spend your summer days soaking up the sunshine and go for a swim at the beach. A beach day is just perfect for unwinding and relaxation. Make your beach day fun by including games such as volleyball, treasure hunt, and tug of war.



4: Into the Wild: Rainforest Adventures

Why waste summer fun when you can ride the world's steepest zipline

at Rainforest Adventures? Rainforest Adventures is home to some of the most exciting activities and rides, such as the Schooner ride, the Flying Dutchman, and the Sentry Hill zipline. Additionally, from the zipline and the top deck, you can get the most beautiful views of the island.

5: Discover Loterie Farm: Hidden Gem in the Green

Loterie Farm – a hidden oasis! Loterie Farm is just the right place to kick off your summer fun if you are looking to unwind and have fun. They are also very well known for monthly parties that bring lots of people together to enjoy food, drinks, and good music.

Summer is here, and St. Maarten has a lot in store for you. Start your summer right, with fun-filled activities, and make it one for the books!



Feature

HOW TO ENJOY SUMMER AT THE CINEMA

UPCOMING SUMMER MOVIES

BY JAHZARA PAYNE

Summer is here, and one of the best ways to enjoy summer on this island with not many activities to do, is to spend time at the movie theatre. This month and the month of July, the cinematic industry has blessed us with an abundance of soon-to-be summer classics, from your favourite Marvel and DC cinematics to a live action of one of the best DreamWorks franchises to ever exist. We have got a range of movies that appeal to everyone's interests, so read carefully for the upcoming movies that will surely hit the theatre screens this summer.

Let us start with the summer hits that have been released already.

First, we have none other than the live action or adaptation of **Lilo and Stitch**, which is a Disney classic. Even though this movie came out around May, the movie is still in theatres for people to watch. This can be one of the many movies you and your friends can start your summer with. This movie is not only for the children, but also for the teens and adults who grew up watching the beloved animated movie as a child. Therefore, watching this during the summer would probably bring back nostalgic memories of your childhood.

Next on the list is the **Ballerina**, which is a film that takes place in one of the best action thriller universes ever known, John Wick. The movie is set between Chapters 3 and 4 of the series, starring actress Ana de Armas as the leading role. Additionally, Keanu Reeves is making an exciting appearance in the movie playing his famous role – John Wick. We cannot have a movie set in the John Wick universe with no John Wick because that is like watching a Spiderman movie with no Spiderman

appearance.

Moving on, one of the many well-known DreamWorks franchises, **How to Train Your Dragon** is also being adapted into a live action film. This is a classic and beautiful movie that was an essential part of many people's childhood. If you still have not seen it, this is your second chance to have an amazing cinematic experience. The live action follows the plot line of the first movie, where the protagonist named Hiccup, played by the young actor Mason Thames, meets his dragon called Toothless while living on an island where they kill dragons. The ironic and complex nature of this story makes this movie an emotional rollercoaster. Nevertheless, it is completely worth the trip to the cinema. Even though this movie may have some controversy in relation to the casting of characters, it is still a perfect movie to watch with your family this summer.

Furthermore, **Elio**, a highly anticipated movie is set to hopefully release in June. Even though there has been some delay with the movie's release date, this movie provides the wonderful opportunity for young children to have something interesting to watch over the summer. What could be more interesting than an 11-year-old boy who is accidentally taken into space and is mistaken for being the ambassador of Earth?

Before moving forward, let us explore a flashback to Summer 2023 – when the Barbenheimer movie contest was born. The double feature of **Barbie vs. Oppenheimer** became an interesting movie experience and discussion due to the two movies being released on the same day. This summer we might have similar situation with both of the highly anticipated films titled **F1 (Formula One)** and **Megan 2.0** releasing on June 27. What better way to spend your summer than watching two thrilling movies back to back on the same day! Would you rather start your day with the adrenaline-

filled movie about a Formula One driver who has to mentor a young rookie driver, or watch a military killbot with an upgraded body take down an incredibly dangerous AI robot? Do you think this double feature will generate the same excitement and cinematic experience as Barbenheimer?

Now, get ready to see prehistoric beings on your screen once again as **Jurassic World Rebirth** is coming to the big screen this July. Even though most people thought the last movie would be the end of this saga, the producers wanted to surprise their audience with another standalone sequel of the famous franchise. This movie will most likely not have the original cast.

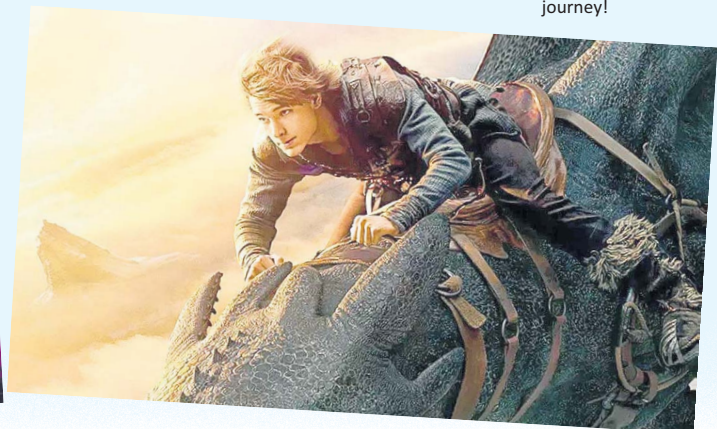
In addition to many Superman movies we already have, there is another one being released for the DC fans called **Superman Legacy**. Who knows, they might do something different and adapt of the DC Superhero comics we have not seen yet to make it refreshing. Nonetheless, it is one of the many movies coming to the screens this summer.

Last but not least, the Marvel fans will storm the theatre once again when **The Fantastic Four: First Steps** hits the cinema screen this July! This blockbuster movie will start the summer with a bang. For those of you who saw the post credit scenes after the last Marvel movie, Thunderbolts, you know what is about to go down in this one.

There are other incredible movies coming out this summer, with special



mention to **Smurfs**, **Happy Gilmore 2**, and **28 Years Later**, so there is no way for you to get bored on this island or anywhere else. Be ready to grab your tickets and your movie snacks and get comfy in the cinema chair to enjoy all the movies you can with friends and family. Enjoy your summer to the fullest and remember to have fun on your cinematic journey!



Feature

SUMMER FASHION

BY ADITI RAJPAL

As the temperature rises, summer clothing becomes more than just a fashion statement – it turns into a safety concern. Heat-stroke and dehydration surely have a higher rate of occurring during the summer months; hence, even the type of dressing impacts the act of temperature control in the body. Thankfully, you can pair utility with style.

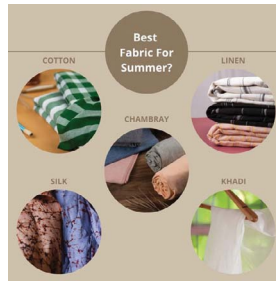
• Select the proper fabrics

Fabric is the most important part of clothing for hot weather. Your best line of protection against overheating is lightweight, breathable materials. For good reason, cotton is a summertime fix. Because it is breathable and absorbent, it works well on everything from T-shirts to dresses. Popular for its looser weave and airy texture, linen is also perfect for hot days because it dries quickly and is even more breathable. Furthermore, Chambray is frequently confused with denim because it looks similar without the added weight, which makes it best for shorts or casual shirts.

Additionally, good fabric choices include bamboo fabric and oth-



ers like Tencel (Lyocell). These fabrics are breathable, soft to the touch, environmentally friendly, and can offer UV protection. Despite being lightweight and breathable, rayon performs poorly in dry heat and is not as effective at preventing perspiration as natural fibres. Natural materials such as nylon or polyester should be avoided. You run a higher risk of overheating because these keep moisture and heat. Despite being expensive, silk can feel clinging in humid conditions, leading to in-



creased perspiration.

• Fashion wearability

In response to the current reality of climate change, designers are favouring more loose, airy figures, and natural fabrics. Oversized linen shirts and wide-leg trousers are popular because they maximize the amount of airflow and are also fashionable. The colour scheme for the upcoming year is seen as pastels and neutrals. Along with being soothing, soft hues of sky blue, lilac, buttercream, and sage reflect sunlight instead of absorbing it.

Although it has a summer turn, layering is still popular. Lightweight, sheer fabrics can be layered over basic items, such as camisoles or swim-

wear, to add dimension without adding bulk. The tankini is making a silent, but bold comeback in swimwear. Tankinis are ideal because they provide greater coverage than a bikini but more freedom of motion than a one-piece.

• Accessories for heat protection

Choosing the right accessories is a good way to stay cool when the heat is on. Some examples of helpful accessories are reusable handheld fans, UV-protected sunglasses, and wide-brimmed straw hats. A lightweight crossbody or tote bag that can fit all of your summer essentials, such as water, sunscreen, and a cold towel, would be perfect. You would have everything you need to stay cool and comfortable if you do decide to take a stroll or spend the day at the beach. Your bag can surely give a little protection as well. Light wraps or scarves will keep your sun protection stylish too. Moreover, you can always invest in a handheld fan, a water bottle, and a UV umbrella for some extra heat wave therapies.

Fashion is an added feature to summer wear, as keeping good health must always be the number one priority. Light colours, loose-fitting clothing, and breathable fabrics, such as linen and cotton, are mood lifters when it is really hot out. The good news is that safety does not have to come at the cost of style. Who says you need to start hating the summer sun now? You can stay cool and comfortable and still look great if you dress right for it.



summer style

It is no secret that when we leave our homes, we want to feel comfortable, presentable, and confident in what we wear and how we look, especially during summer activities. However, we can feel comfortable and look confident while also being dressed modestly. It has been observed that youths around the world typically dress wearing clothes that are ahead of their age, especially at the beach.

There are various swimwear options that are both stylish and modest and available for everyone. Furthermore, most importantly you can feel comfortable, as well as confident wearing them. Some of these options include swimsuits such as tankinis and rash guard swimsuits. Moreover, for the young ladies who prefer the option of wearing a two-piece bikini, there are various cover-up options for walking around the beach when out of the water.

On the other hand, finding the perfect hairstyle can also be a major struggle during the summertime, especially for girls with very thick hair that require large efforts to style it on their own every morning. It is very convenient to have a hairstyle that makes you feel both comfortable and cute. During the summer heat, I would suggest doing short or shoulder length hairstyles. It is also the perfect opportunity to try out fun vibrant new colours.

Getting your hair braided is one of the best hairstyles for the summer as it is both very low maintenance and protects your hair. Headband wigs are also a great style as your natural hair is safely corrowed beneath the wig, and you can remove and place the wig back on at your own convenience. These are my personal tips for the perfect summer style!



summer style

FLYING OR FERRYING BETWEEN THE ISLANDS THIS SUMMER?

SUMMER ISLAND HOPPING GUIDE

Summer in the Caribbean? Yes, please! Whether you are visiting Barbados to enjoy some time with family members, a music festival in Saint Lucia, the beaches of the Bahamas to unwind, or going on a shopping spree in Trinidad, island-hopping is an essential mode of island living.

However, the pressing question is: How do you travel from paradise to paradise? For teens on Caribbean islands, the top two ways to travel are via air (flights) and sea (mini cruises and ferries). In this article, we analyse the pros and cons and give you cool insider information on how to island-hop like a pro this summer.

ISLAND-HOPPING THE CARIBBEAN BY AIR

Pros:

- Quick and simple – you can island-hop in an hour on most of the domestic routes, ideal for a weekend getaway.
- Frequent flights – Caribbean Airlines, LIAT, InterCaribbean, and Air Antilles all operate several daily regional flights.
- Ideal for long distances.

Your best option would be flying if you are traveling from the Southern group of islands (i.e., Grenada) up to places like the Bahamas or Puerto Rico.

Cons:

- Flight cancellations or delays – regional airlines are not always the most reliable, especially in areas with small fleets and unpredictable weather conditions.
- Expensive for short visits – surprisingly, a 30-minute flight can cost more than a round-trip to Miami at times, so always compare prices!
- Terminal delays – immigration, security, and airline check-in lines can eat into your travel time, particularly if you are staying for only a few days.

SEA TRAVEL: ISLAND CRUISES, WATER TAXIS, AND FERRIES

Pros:

- Scenic and relaxing – what a thrill to fly over the Caribbean Sea with sea salt scents and island panoramas – grand character appeal.
- Low costs – the ferries and water taxis are less expensive than flying, particularly for teens and residents.
- Everything about the bags – no charge for bags and no airport security to deal with either. You just take your bags, and you go.

Cons:

- Slow trips – the trip would take several hours, depending on the distance and the state of the sea, which is not ideal if you are low on time.
- Limited routes – not all islands are connected by ferry. There is about neighbour-to-neighbour service between the neighbouring islands (i.e. St. Vincent to Grenada; St. Kitts to Antigua).
- Struggles at bay – if the seas are rough, the journey is not necessarily always smooth all the way. If you are susceptible to sea sickness, use motion sickness medication.



SO, WHAT SHOULD YOU CHOOSE?

If you ...	Go For ...
Need to cover long distances or move quickly	Flying
Would rather spend less and enjoy the ride	Take a Ferry
Travelling to nearby islands (less than 2 hours)	Ferry
Island-hopping across long spans	Flying
Prefer flexibility and simple check-ins	Ferry

TEEN TIMES ISLAND-HOPPING TIPS

- 1: Reserve your early summer seats now!
- 2: If traveling by air or ferry, book your seat before someone else grabs it.
- 3: Verify entry requirements as certain islands continue to require identification, residency proof, or travel papers.
- 4: Always keep your passport or ID on you just in case. Travel light, and do not forget to pack right and light with swimwear, flip-flops, sunscreen, and goodwill.
- 5: Pack charging cables and headphones as carry-on in the ferries. Be smart, be safe, and travel with companions or family members if possible. When you are going to another island, always have someone close to you know your plans.
- 6: Experiment with something different. From goat water in Montserrat to doubles in Trinidad, and surfing in Barbados, every island has something unique.

FINAL WORD

Come as you are, by plane or by boat, as travelling in the Caribbean is always a vibe. Catch some sun this summer, hop on an adventure, and create some memories of island-hopping. The adventure is out there, just grab your bag and go!



WHY YOUR BRAIN REMEMBERS SUMMERS BETTER THAN FINALS

BY SANYA JANDIAL

With natural blush on your face, friends making plans 24/7, and no pressure of responsibilities, summer is that time of the year where opportunities feel limitless, and the clock seemingly ticks slower. As people start getting older, some memories may start deteriorating. However, for the most part, summer vacation remains a vivid memory in most minds. Many psychological findings provide interesting explanations as to why, universally, summers are remembered in so much detail.

• Emotional Intensity (affective encoding)

The amygdala is a part of the brain which is primarily involved in processing emotions. When we are happy, excited, or even anxious, the amygdala kicks in and strengthens how the hippocampus stores those memories in that moment. So, when something is fun, it is also neurochemically memorable because emotionally charged events are better encoded in our long-term memory!

• Rehearsal & Storytelling

The more you repeat something, the easier it is to remember. We all know this from learning to study! In psychology, this is called the retrieval practice effect. People often retell experiences about their summers through pictures, social media, journaling, or even daydreaming. All of these rehearsal strategies aid in reinforcing those memories and storing them for a lifetime.

• Sensory Details

The Proustian Effect comes into

place when sensory triggers instantly unlock vivid memories. Everyone's summers are different, but they are all rich in sensory input which gets stored in the olfactory bulb and auditory cortex. The smell of a specific sunscreen, the sound of flip-flops, or the feeling of hot sand all contribute to multi-sensory encoding.

• Temporal Distinctiveness

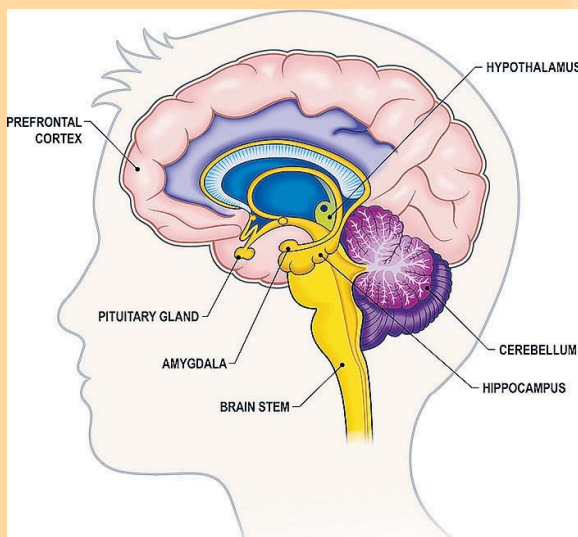
The Distinctiveness Principle says that when something stands out in a timeline, it becomes easier to retrieve. Since the school year may feel very structured and monotonous, summer may almost feel like a mini-year of its own. The freedom to do absolutely nothing becomes a distinct chapter in your mental calendar because your brain knows that something is different from your usual routine.

• Reminiscence Bump

This period is between the ages of 10 to 30 where people experience many "firsts" and identity-shaping experiences. Your brain flags this time period as formative, or worthy of cherishing, which leads to growth and self-awareness. Many shows, such as *The Summer I Turned Pretty*, centre on these coming-of-age summers which resonate with what people experience during the "bump".

• Decreased Cognitive Clutter

At some point in their life, everyone has said: "My brain can't take in any more information." During the school year, your brain is constantly bombarded with academic material, to-do lists, and strict schedules. When your cognitive load is high, there's less mental space to deeply encode personal or non-essential memories.



In contrast, summer offers your brain more bandwidth to fully process and store meaningful experiences since school is not occupying all your cognitive resources.

So the next time you randomly remember getting lost in Rome 10 years ago, or riding your bike barefoot around the neighbourhood as a kid, you will know why those insignificant moments are still locked in your memory. They were emotionally charged, sensory-rich, and distinct enough for your brain to hold onto forever.

Feature

HEADING OFF TO COLLEGE? HERE'S WHAT TO PACK.

BY SUHANI NATHUMAL AND LEHAR MARATA

Leaving for college is one of the most life-changing milestones in anyone's life. Moving to a completely new city surrounded by unfamiliar faces can be both exciting and overwhelming. With a seemingly endless number of things to take care of, it is easy to forget some of the important tasks that help make this transition smoother. That is why we have prepared a helpful checklist to prepare you for college!

Before you bid farewell to our lovely island of St. Maarten and say hello to your new home, make sure you have got everything covered to make this new chapter as enjoyable and organized as possible!

• Seasonal clothing

If the country you are moving to experiences seasonal weather, which is something we in St. Maarten are not used to, make sure to pack clothing tailored to the weather for the first few months. You can always bring back more clothes for the second semester when you (hopefully) return home for winter break.

• Toiletries

Do some research beforehand to see if your favourite toiletry brands are available in the country you are moving to, and whether they are more expensive or cheaper than at home. If they are more expensive or hard to find, try to buy them in St. Maarten to save on money and the stress of finding new products!

• Laptop

Most of your schoolwork and classes will be digital, so having a reliable laptop is essential. Look out for back-to-school deals, either locally or online, before leaving. Make sure the laptop you are taking with you matches the re-

quirements of your program, if there are any specific ones, as you definitely do not want to spend money on a laptop that cannot be used.

• Favourite snacks and seasonings

Just like with toiletries, bring items you might not find or are more expensive in the country you are moving to. This not only saves you money, it also gives you a comforting taste of home when you need it most.

• Over the counter medication

Pack the medications you are used to taking for things like colds, allergies and headaches. It is easier to have access to what you know works, especially when you are not feeling well.

• Comforting trinkets

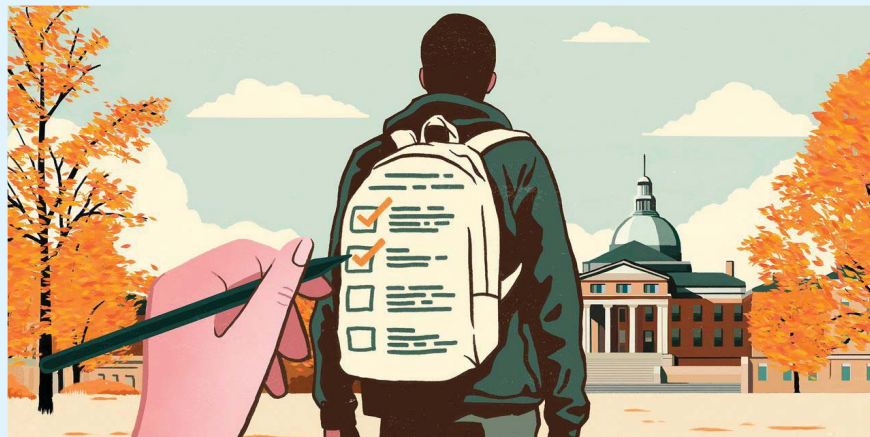
Bring a few personal trinkets, such as photo frames, souvenirs, flags and gifts that remind you of home. These little things can make your dorm or apartment feel a lot more comfort-

ing and familiar.

Although it feels like you have to pack your entire life in a suitcase, it is much easier than you think. Keep in mind

there are always people traveling to bring things that you may forget, or sometimes those things are even available in the country you are moving to. Of course, it is not an ideal situation to forget something before moving; therefore, it can definitely be avoided by planning and packing in advance.

Moving away from home is never easy. You will be leaving behind your friends, family, familiar streets, favourite restaurants, and basically everything you have ever known. However, just like with every other phase in life, this too will pass. Before you know it, you will be settled into your new home, surrounded by new people, creating new memories, and writing the next wonderful chapter of your life.



THE END OF AN ERA, BUT THE BEGINNING OF A NEW ONE

Here's a guide for your first year of high school!

BY ARTI BULLAND

Hey there, Soon-to-be-high-schooler! You are about to level up – big time. You are finishing up sixth grade and about to step into the wonderful world of secondary school. First of all, congratulations! You have made it through primary school. Now, you are heading into secondary school and...let's be honest, you probably feel a bit of nervous excitement.

It is a big change and may feel a little scary, but don't worry! Every single high schooler has been exactly where you are right now and has been wondering what the next year will be like. That is where this guide comes in. It includes everything you actually need to know. Of course, it is not any boring lecture, just advice from older students who have been through it all.

1: Don't panic: Everyone's new!

You are not the only newbie. Everyone is starting fresh, just like you. Even if some persons already know each other from other schools or sports clubs, nobody is a high school expert yet. So, don't worry if you do not know anyone, most students are just as nervous and eager to make friends.

2: Get to know your school.

High schools can feel huge. There are more classrooms and more hallways. At first, it may feel like a maze. You might take a few wrong turns and end up at the wrong class, it happens. But after the first week or two, it will all start to make sense and fall into place. Take your time to learn your way around.

3: Be organized without stressing too much.

High school means more subjects, different teachers, and a lot more stuff to remember. You do not need to turn into a human planner, but a little organization can help you along your way. These small things can help in being organized:

- Pack your bag the night before.
- Use an agenda or an app on your phone to keep track of your assignments.
- Do not just shove everything into your bag; using folders can help a lot with organization.

4: Ask questions.

High school teachers are not scary at all. They want to help you. If you do not understand something, raise your hand or ask after class. You will not look silly; in fact, you will look smarter for wanting to learn. Some teachers may be stricter than others, but they just want to help you succeed. Additionally, they completely understand that you are adjusting to this new environment. They have seen all the lost looks and much more, so it is all part of the transition process.

5: Get involved! You'll thank yourself later.

Join a club. Try joining a team. Sign up for drama classes, dance, or what-



ever sounds interesting to you. It is a great way to meet new people, especially if you are struggling to make friends in your classes. Furthermore, do not worry if you might not be good at something, you do not need to be an expert. Just show up and give it a try. This will also help you get out of your comfort zone and discover something you are really interested in. That's where the fun is.

6: Be open to new friendships.

You might or might not stay close with your primary school friends. That's okay. People grow and change. Be open to meeting different types of people and, most importantly, be kind and respectful to everyone.

7: Be mindful of how you make use of your phones.

Most schools let you bring your

phone, but that does not mean you can scroll on TikTok during your classes. Keep it in your bag or in your pocket unless you're told otherwise, because most schools have strict rules. If you break these rules, your phone may be taken and locked away until the end of the day, or it may even wind up in the principal's office.

8: Be yourself.

High school is full of different people. You do not have to change who you are to fit in. Be whatever feels real to you. That is how you find real friends. The best friendships happen when you are authentic. If someone gives you a hard time, do not suffer in silence. Talk to a teacher, student counsellor, your parents, or anyone you are comfortable speaking with.

9: Do your assignments on time – pay

attention to deadlines!

Yes, there is in fact much more homework in high school. No, it does not need to take over your life. Set a specific time to do it each day, whether that is when you get home or in the night after dinner. Just do not leave it all to Sunday night because that leads to panic and regret. Do the hard stuff first then chill. Moreover, ask for help if you are stuck, and do not just stare at the page aimlessly until you fall asleep.

10: Do not put too much pressure on yourself.

High school is not just about grades and exams. It is about discovering who you are, what you love, and who you want to become. Sure, it can be overwhelming at times, but it can also be the most unforgettable time of your life. The first few weeks are not about being perfect; they are about figuring things out. Some days will be great, and some might be messy. That is how you learn. You are going to grow so much over the next few years, not just in height, but also in confidence and independence. Take it one day at a time, celebrate the little wins, and remember you've got this.

Starting high school feels like a huge deal, and it kind of is. However, you do not have to have it all figured out on day one. Just be yourself and try your best. You are going to be just fine. You will make mistakes, but that is how you will learn and grow. One day, you will be writing advice for the next batch of sixth graders. Trust the journey, and do not forget to enjoy it. You've got this!



HONOURING FREEDOM AND RESILIENCE

BY ALISAH KIRTON

Every year on July 1, the people of Sint Maarten gather to celebrate Emancipation Day – a great event commemorating the abolition of slavery in the Dutch Caribbean in 1863. This day is evident of the continuous path toward justice and equality, as well as of the resilient attitude of people.

• A Historical Milestone

Although the Dutch colonies officially abolished slavery on July 1, 1863, the acts of the slaves themselves helped to define Sint Maarten's road to freedom. The French part of the island outlawed slavery in 1848, which drove many slaves from the Dutch side across the border in search of freedom. These acts of rebellion and the impractical difficulties of preserving slavery finally drove Dutch officials to declare emancipation under pressure.

• Commemorative Traditions

Emancipation Day is marked by a sequence of events that combine cultural expression with sober memory. Church services, that offer prayers and contemplations on the value of freedom, such as those at the Anglican Church on Back Street in Philipsburg, usually start the day. To honour the path from slavery to emancipation, they have symbolic marches afterwards, like the "Freedom March" to the Boardwalk. Celebrating Afro-Caribbean history, local artists also showcase dance, music, and poetry including the traditional Ponum dance. Through dramatization, they also re-enact events

like the "64,000 We Have a Name" to honour the thousands who suffered slavery, therefore bringing history alive.

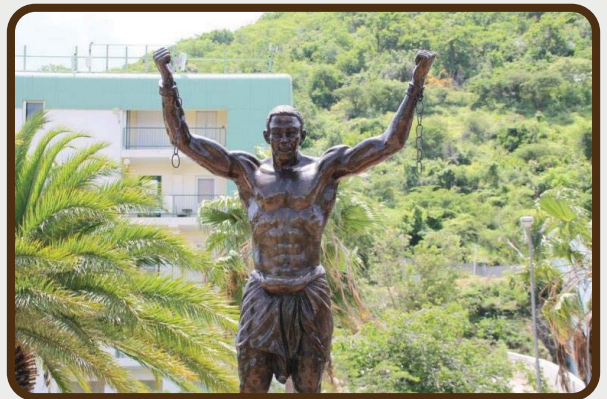
• Reflecting on Legacy and Progress

Emancipation Day calls to action for the present and future as well as serving as a memorial of the past. Leaders and citizens of the community use this opportunity to discuss continuous issues like racial equality, social justice, and cultural identity preservation. The day invites reflection on the development achieved in addition to the work still to be done toward true freedom and equality for all.

• A Day of Unity and Celebration

Emancipation Day is very important in the calendar of Sint Maarten because it is the first public holiday the Parliament of Sint Maarten instituted after its new constitutional status in 2010. On this day, families gather, communities come together, and everyone honours the resilience of forebears who battled for freedom. By means of education, cultural expression, and community events, Sint Maarten keeps the emancipatory spirit alive, therefore ensuring that the lessons of the past guide a more equitable and inclusive future.

Therefore, Emancipation Day in Sint Maarten is a contemporary celebration of the relentless search of independence and the rich cultural tapestry that define the island in the present moment, not only as a historical landmark.



Feature

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

A call to action

BY JAHZARA PAYNE

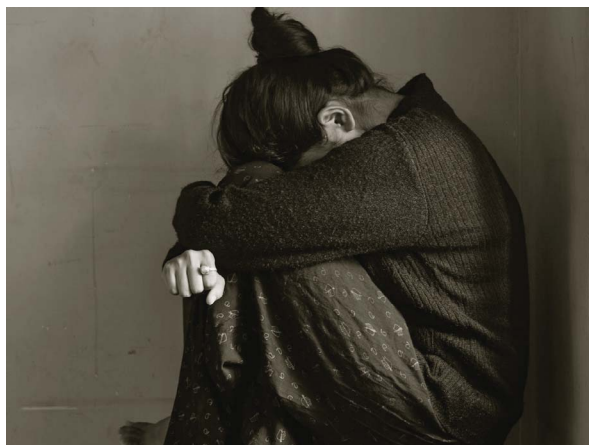
May was known as Mental Health Awareness month – a period of time dedicated to highlighting the importance of mental wellbeing and providing reminders to take care of your mental health. However, even though May is long gone, this issue demands our attention beyond simply one month as the world is currently facing a mental health crisis.

Throughout the past few decades, research shows there has been an alarming rise in mental health cases, especially among teenagers. These cases consist of depression, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive and other related disorders. People may view this problem as just an American problem, but this is a global issue that has unfortunately also impacted communities across the Caribbean.

In early May, this issue was brought to the Sint Maarten Parliament in a public meeting by the Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labour VSA, Richinel Brug, where he raised an alarm at the abrupt rise in mental health cases among the youth ages 15 years old and younger. This truly is shocking as the many young people on our island are going through a hard time and there is seemingly not much help for them.

The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) has also provided statistical information regarding the increase in mental health cases from 2021 to 2024, which should be given immediate attention. On the other hand, some locals may view this and believe that the current generation has absolutely nothing to stress about, and there is no such thing as mental health issues. However, that is far from the truth as times have changed, and so have the problems of this generation.

For instance, some young people may experience climate anxiety as they worry about the current state and future of the world due to the climate crisis. Nevertheless, some adults see the youth's problems as



trivial and would instead invalidate their feeling by speaking on how they had worse experiences during their childhood. Although it is important to not overlook the issues that previous generations have faced, it is essential to be mindful of how the world has evolved to present new obstacles and problems that could cause anxiety and fear in young people.

Furthermore, the current generation has grown up with social media, which is one of the greatest challenges experienced by young people worldwide. Even though social media may be our collective source of entertainment, it can also be a platform that is used negatively to cyberbully others. Moreover, it encourages comparison culture when you see someone living a better life than you or someone says hurtful things about your appearance, which can be detrimental to one's self-esteem and confidence. Therefore, these issues facilitated by the internet tend to affect the youth's mindset and can also trigger different mental health concerns.

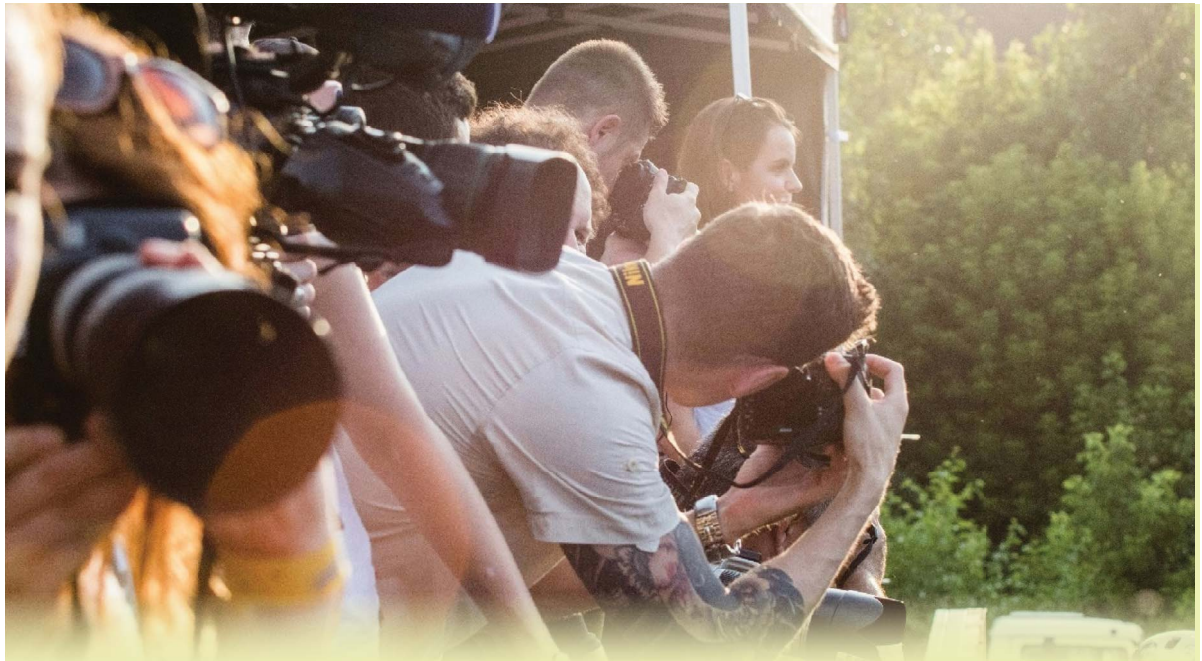
In addition to social media, one's lifestyle, family life, past experiences, and school can lead to a child's mental health being depleted. People may not realize it, but the youth

their daily lives, consumed by these feelings in their body that eat away at them day after day. They can experience thoughts wondering if they are worth it, whether they belong, or even wonder if things would be better if they were not here.

However, it is not only teens that go through this, but adults can face these issues as well. Everyone goes through these things, which is why the government should try their utmost best to bring in skilled mental health professionals and other helpful resources to mitigate another sharp rise in mental health patients. Nonetheless, until the government takes this into consideration, please remember to check on your children, your friends, your families, and even your neighbour, because you never know what someone may be going through.

People might say they are fine, but in reality they are not, and it may be extremely difficult for them to just keep on living. Work together with one another to find a healthy solution and have weekly talks so they can let everything out of their system. We as a country cannot afford to continue losing our people to mental illnesses, and we have to be there for each other and come together to create a brighter future for St. Maarten.





THE IMPORTANCE OF CELEBRATING WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY – THE RIGHT TO TRUTH

Every year on May 3, people around the world come together to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. This day is not just for journalists, but also for everyone who values truth, free expression, and the right to know what is happening in the world. World Press Freedom Day was established by the United Nations in 1993 to highlight the importance of a free press and to remind governments of their responsibility to protect the right to free speech. It is a day to celebrate the work of journalists and to remember those who have lost their lives in the pursuit of truth.

Around the world, World Press Freedom Day is marked by various events and activities that emphasize the role of journalism in society. These celebrations often include conferences, workshops, exhibitions, and cultural events that bring together journalists, media professionals, and the public. This year, the global commemoration took place in Brussels,

Belgium, with a focus on the theme “Reporting in the Brave New World – The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the Media.” The event featured discussions on how AI is transforming journalism, both positively and negatively, and included the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize ceremony.

During the celebration last year, there were several interesting events that took place around the world. In Eswatini, celebrations centred on digital transformation and climate change, highlighting the media’s role in addressing environmental issues. Furthermore, workshops and discussions emphasized the need for journalists to adapt to digital technologies and to report responsibly on climate-related topics. South Sudan’s commemoration included a football match between journalists and youth, promoting awareness of press freedom in a fun and engaging way. Uganda’s activities featured a Media Football Gala, tree planting campaigns, and the Modern-Day Heroes Awards, recog-

nizing individuals and organizations contributing to the media sector and environmental conservation.

In today’s digital age, the youth is constantly consuming information through social media, blogs, and online news. Understanding where this information comes from and ensuring that it is accurate is essential. Therefore, World Press Freedom Day serves as a reminder of the importance of reliable journalism and the dangers of misinformation. By supporting press freedom, you can help ensure that different voices are heard, and that the media remains a tool for accountability and change. Hence, engaging with trustworthy news sources, thinking critically about the information consumed, and even participating in school or community journalism projects are ways you can contribute.

Reading news stories from trustworthy sources, going to local events, or starting talks about how important a free press is are all ways to celebrate World Press Freedom Day. You can

really make a difference by sharing news on social media, supporting independent journalists, and speaking out for press freedom. Remember that everyone has the right to be able to get information and share their thoughts. We can help make society fairer and more informed by valuing and supporting press freedom.

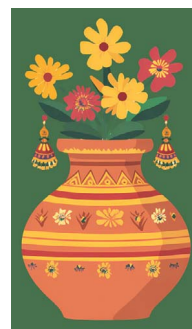
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Samarpan 2025: A Bharatanatyam Dance Recital



BY LEHAR MARATA

St. Maarten is known as a melting pot of cultures, and one of the most prominent among them is the Indian culture. The Natya Arts Center (NAC) beautifully highlights this rich heritage through the Indian classical dance form, Bharatanatyam. While they present this art throughout events in the year, its beauty is especially evident at their annual recital: Samarpan.

At the end of this academic year, NAC held their annual Bharatanatyam recital, which featured vibrant costumes, jingling bells, captivating music, and much more. The theme of the recital was Krishna. Lord Krishna is a central figure in Hinduism known for his wisdom, playfulness, and divine love. Each performance depicted different aspects of his story, whether it was his mischievous moments with his mother, Yashoda, tales of his miracles, or his love story with his beloved, Radha.

In addition to these divine performances, Ms. Aparna Samaga and Ms. Inessa Careto, the two teachers (gurus) of the foundation, also choreographed several intricate pieces that intertwined rhythmic beats from St. Maarten's Djembe Drums with graceful Bharatanatyam steps. Another showstopper of the evening was a performance by Ms. Aparna Samaga, the founder of Natya Arts Center,

who danced to Die With a Smile by Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars. The song was performed live on stage by Riana Jandial and Abhiram Lulla, showcasing the various talents within NAC. Clearly, the students of Natya Arts Center possess more than just dancing skills! Several other students also showcased their musical talents by singing bhajans (devotional songs).

The evening concluded with an emotional speech by Ms. Samaga and an award ceremony, recognizing the talented students. It also marked a bittersweet moment as seven students completed their last recital with NAC, as they prepare to move abroad to pursue their tertiary education. Their dedication, growth, and commitment were celebrated and appreciated by all in the audience. In the audience was Ms. Clara Reyes, Head of the Department of Arts and Culture, whose presence underscored the importance of such cultural events on the island.

The recital deeply moved the audience, inspiring many with its blend of different cultures and expressive forms. Families, friends, and community members were captivated by the performances, leaving the venue with a newfound appreciation for the rich cultural heritage that Natya Arts Center passionately preserves and promotes.



Feature

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