

TEENTIMES

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

MAY 2024



**This is what the
"government" looks
like to teens.
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THE CIRCUS OF ST. MAARTEN POLITICS: A TEEN'S LAMENT

Once again, St. Maarten's government has turned into a complete circus, and as a young person in this country, I can't help but feel a mix of frustration and embarrassment, and a dash of disbelief. The latest clown act in this never-ending political drama was brought to us by MP Kevin Maingrette, who managed to destabilize the entire government by pulling his support from the coalition, only to backtrack a few days later, claiming he made a mistake.

What's even more absurd is that this entire fiasco was reportedly orchestrated by MPs from the NA and UP parties, who convinced Maingrette to jump ship and then tried to form a new coalition with the same people they'd just manipulated him to leave. You can't make this stuff up!

It's no wonder that young people in St. Maarten are completely disillusioned with politics. We already have a hard time believing that our elected representatives have our best interests at heart, and this latest debacle just cements our distrust. How are we supposed to have faith in a system where our politicians behave like puppets on strings, yanked around by whichever party pulls the hardest? We're tired of the broken promises, the infighting, and the constant instability.

As teens, we're expected to look up to these so-called leaders, but what examples are they setting? Instead of seeing integrity, dedication, and a genuine commitment to the public good, we see a bunch of adults acting like children in a playground brawl. If we are laughing at our politicians, imagine what the rest of the world thinks. St. Maarten's government has become a global joke, and it's the youth who will have to deal with the fallout of

this international embarrassment.

Elected representatives should act with dignity and integrity, safeguarding public trust and working tirelessly for the betterment of their constituents. Instead, we get a display of backstabbing, flip-flopping, and outright incompetence. This isn't just about one MP making a blunder, it's about a systemic failure that makes us question if any of these politicians are fit to lead.

These politicians aren't just betraying our trust; they're actively undermining our future. Funds meant for education, healthcare, and infrastructure, now have to go to yet another election. We just had one in January! This leaves us with underfunded schools, even less support for youth initiatives through government, and crumbling roads among many other things. We have to reclaim our future from the hands of those who have betrayed us.

We deserve better than corrupt politicians who view their positions as a means to personal gain. We deserve leaders who are committed to public service and who will fight for a bright future, our future. Until we see this change, our sense of betrayal will only deepen, leaving a generation of young

people disenchanted and disconnected from the political process that should serve us all.

For us teens, the future looks uncertain. We worry about our education, job prospects, and overall quality of life on an island where political stability seems like a pipe dream. We want leaders who inspire us, who make us believe that a better future is possible. Instead, we're stuck watching a bunch of clowns run the show,

turning our government into a laughingstock.

It's time for our politicians to grow up and start acting like the leaders they were elected to be. They need to stop treating our government like a game of musical chairs and start working together to build a stable, prosperous future for all of us. Until then, they're just embarrassing themselves – and us – in front of the whole world.





LU UNVEILS GROUND-BREAKING DUAL ENROLMENT PROGRAM WITH COLLEGE OF COASTAL GEORGIA

Learning Unlimited Preparatory School (LUPS) over the weekend proudly announced the launch of its new Dual Enrolment program in partnership with the College of Coastal Georgia (CCGA). This landmark initiative provides LUPS students in grades 10-12 with the extraordinary opportunity to take college courses concurrently while completing their high school education.

Also known as concurrent enrolment, the Dual Enrolment program is a strategic collaboration that enables students to enrol in college classes at CCGA at a reduced in-state tuition rate. This innovative approach is designed to count towards both their high school graduation requirements and their college degree, thus catapulting them into their higher education journey with both credits and experience in hand.

LUPS stands as the only high school in the Caribbean offering such a program, distinguishing itself as an institution that not only values academic excellence, but also proactive preparation for an increasingly competitive post-secondary landscape.

With U.S. Department of Education statistics showing a surge in dual enrolment participation, LUPS is at the forefront of this educational revolution.

Students participating in the program can look forward to a wealth of benefits including, but not limited to the following:

- Introduction to college life: Gaining early exposure to the college environment.
- Exploration of interests: Discovering potential career paths and academic majors.
- Skill development: Acquiring essential skills for both further education and the workforce.
- Motivation for higher education: Encouragement to pursue college and beyond.
- Accelerated college pathway: Saving time and money by earning college credits early.

During the MOU Signing Ceremony, Dr. Jason Umfress, Vice President for Student Affairs and Enrolment Management at CCGA, highlighted the program's significance. "This partnership is a testament to our shared

commitment to education and the momentum it brings. Starting with just nine students from Learning Unlimited, we're setting forth a program that will expand horizons, enrich lives, and create a legacy of learning that transcends distance."

President of the College of Coastal Georgia, Dr. Michelle Johnson, expressed her enthusiasm for the partnership. "This joint enrolment is not just a partnership; it's a bridge between institutions sharing a heart for empowering students. We're thrilled to welcome LUPS students into our academic community and eager to see the growth and achievements that will undoubtedly come from this collaboration."

LUPS Head Amissa President said the partnership marks a significant milestone in the school's commitment to providing unparalleled educational opportunities for its students: "For the past five years, we have been diligently working towards establishing a partnership with a college for a dual enrolment program. Today, I am thrilled that our efforts have come to fruition with this collaboration with the College of Coastal Georgia. This

partnership stands as a testament to our unwavering dedication to fostering academic excellence, innovation, and student success."

Amissa President further noted that the College of Coastal Georgia is renowned for its commitment to academic rigor, student success, and community engagement. She said that by partnering with such an esteemed institution, LUPS is providing its students with access to world-class education and resources that will empower them to thrive in their academic and professional endeavours.

She went on to express her gratitude to the leadership and faculty of the College of Coastal Georgia and to Ayana and Ebbie Parsons for their invaluable introduction and instrumental role in establishing the connection with CCGA. Special acknowledgment goes to the teams led by Dr. Jason Umfress at CCGA and Mark Beland at LUPS, who have been instrumental in championing this project.



LUPS Head Amissa President (second from left) signing with President of the College of Coastal Georgia, Dr. Michelle Johnson, and Dr. Jason Umfress (right), Vice President of Student Affairs and Enrolment Management. Also pictured is Dr. Ebbie Parson (left), Founder of Yardstick Management.

CURING YOUR BOREDOM WITH ACTIVITIES

BY MAKAYLA COOKS

Are you interested in exploring different hobbies or activities to keep your brain busy? Well, look no further! Here are different indoor and outdoor hobbies and sport activities to cure your boredom and restore the balance between your social and academic life. Hobbies and sports can have an effective impact on your life – improved focus, peace of mind, and enhancing your overall sense of happiness.

As we advance in our educational journey, it may become harder to battle the hurdles that come with the academic aspect of your life, which is why engaging in hobbies and sports can be that perfect balance for you. You may ask: "What is a hobby?" A hobby is an activity done regularly in one's free time for pleasure. This can be done indoors and outdoors.

SOME INDOOR HOBBIES THAT YOU CAN TRY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1: Crochet: a craft technique that involves using a hooked needle to create fabric by interlocking loops of yarn or thread.

--A beautiful way to make your own creations that vary from plushies to blankets.

--Time: May take up a lot of time as a beginner in the learning stages.

--Costs: Typically not very pricey, but bigger or better quality yarn costs a pretty penny.

2: Baking/cooking: Combining (precisely measured) ingredients and heating or baking them.

--Great way to express yourself through food or pastries; can also be a bonding opportunity (for friends and family or side hustle).

--Time: At least 2 hours must be dedicated to this hobby (more if trying a new recipe).

--Costs: Purchasing ingredients to cook can cost a maximum of \$60, while baking can exceed that limit, so it can be a pricey dedication.

--You can also improve your skills by joining a baking or cooking class on the island.

3: Pottery: Cookware or vases (plates/pots) made of shaped, fired clay.

--A creative way to design your

own household items.

--Time: Pottery requires patience and persistence, so it takes up a lot of time.

--Costs: To begin this hobby at home, you may be looking at a \$1,000 minimum pricing, which includes everything from the pottery wheel, down to the finish glaze.

--On our beautiful island, it is also possible to participate in pottery classes located on the French side. Hope Estate, Grand-Case, at Pinky Chich'Atlier offers children, beginner and advanced pottery classes in English or French.

SOME INDOOR SPORTS YOU CAN ENGAGE IN ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1: Basketball: Mostly indoor court game between two teams that score by tossing an inflated orange ball through a raised goal/hoop from the other team's side.

--Commonly played sport amongst all genders that can lead to a successful career.

--Time: Basketball requires a lot of practice thus it requires a lot of your time (trainings per week, varying from 2-3 hours).

--Price: Basketball practice itself is not very costly, nor is the attire.

--Our island has more than three3 basketball teams and basketball courts around the neighbourhoods, which can be used for fun or extra practice.

2: Boxing: A fight with the fists, especially with padded gloves in a roped square ring.

--An effective way to release anger, build muscle, and self-defence if needed.

--Time: Practice times vary.

--Costs: Typically, if paying for lessons, the equipment is provided. Starting to box at home can be pricey though, as gym equipment can cost over \$500.

3: Volleyball: A game for two teams in which a large ball is hit by

hand over a high net, the aim being to score points by making the ball reach the ground on the opponent's side of the court.

--Time: Practice times may vary.

--Costs: Highest cost is the practice fee.

--Typically a sport provided by the schools.

THERE ARE ALSO THE FOLLOWING OUTDOOR OPPORTUNITIES

1: Hiking: Taking long, vigorous walks through nature.

--Time: Depends on how much distance you are willing to cover.

--Costs: Typically free of charge.

2: Photography: To take photos or films

--A great way to capture moments and have as physical memories.

--Time: Photography requires patience for the right shot, and it can be at any time.

--Costs: Photography can be done through cellular devices in which the cost starts from \$100 and up. Moreover, if you would like to be more advanced, professional cameras cost a minimum of \$200 for good quality. Other external factors such as the type of film and space may also add to the final costs.

3: Gardening/planting: Placing different seeds or young plants in the earth to grow.

--Great way to decorate your existing garden or to start one, also nice as decoration.

--Time: The maintenance requires some attention, as typically you must water your plants daily; however, that should not take more than 20 minutes of your time, depending on how many seeds you have planted.

--Costs: Gardening can be costly if you feed into unnecessary or overpriced equipment, but generally it should not cost more than \$100 (unless you bulk on soil restock).





SOME OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES YOU CAN TRY ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1: Tennis: a game in which two or four players strike a small green ball with rackets over a net stretched across a court.

--Time: A tennis match can last up to an hour or less, deepening on how many sets you do.

--Costs: The most expensive part of tennis is finding a good quality and passable racket, which can vary from \$10-\$200 dollars. The attire and balls typically do not cost more than \$40.

--St. Maarten has two locations where this sport can take place: Belair Community Center and SXM Padel.

2: Track and field: a sport that includes athletic contests based on running, jumping, and throwing skills.

--If you're interested in a sport that focuses on speed, strength and agility, then this might be the right fit for you!

--Time: Weekly practice can take up time.

--Costs: The highest cost may be the payment for the lesson, but running shoes and work-out attire is typically not expensive.

--Our island has ample track teams, and games normally commence at Raoul Illidge.

3: Soccer: A game played between two teams where each team tries to

win by kicking a white and black ball into the other team's goal.

--Soccer is also a popular sport that many have succeeded in from young ages.

--Time: Weekly or daily practice to improve your skills may take up a lot of time.

--Price: Soccer shoes also known as "cleats" can be very costly, ranging from \$100 and up. Furthermore, the attire is not costly.

--St. Maarten and St. Martin have various groups/teams for the youth to join.

4: Swimming: The act of propelling oneself through water using the limbs.

--Swimming is a well beloved sport of children through all ages.

--Time: Practice may commence weekly, which takes up a lot of time.

--Price: Swim lessons themselves are the priciest part; however, the swimwear is affordable.

--You can start your journey as a swimmer by Belair Community Center or at other locations that offer these services.

These activities listed above provide you with abundant opportunities to immerse yourself in the world, allowing you to strike a positive balance between your social and academic life, while improving your overall well-being.



A complete guide to studying in the Netherlands

BY CHIRAG RAMCHANDANI



As the 2023-2024 academic year comes to an end and a new era of opportunities for students of this island approaches, the Netherlands becomes a new home and hence experiences a significant influx of international students eager to begin their educational journey. The Netherlands is a location that provides an enriching experience and potential for students to flourish. It is also well-known for its top-notch and globally ranked universities, diverse atmosphere, and active student life. However, adjusting to a new life in a foreign nation has its own set of difficulties, particularly at a time when travelling is frequent.

The academic year starts in early September; which is when the Netherlands experiences its highest student arrival season. Students from all over the planet come with aspirations to these top-notch universities, due to their innovative research programs, high academic standards, and potential for students to thrive and flourish. Some of these universities may include the University of Amsterdam, University of Groningen, the Eindhoven University of Technology, and Delft University of Technology. The nation is flourishing and seeks to further grow with the energy of its new immigrants, each bringing hopes and expectations of their own. As a result, it is important to build a map to guide us on the path and journey that lies ahead.

Primarily during the peak time of year, obtaining suitable housing is one of the main obstacles. This occurs due to the severe shortage in student housing; hence, it is critical to begin your search in student dorms, private rentals, and university housing as available options as soon as possible. Additionally, international students have the opportunity to reserve rooms/dorms at many universities; however, their availability is limited. Nevertheless, some groups like DUWO and SSH specialize in student housing. Websites such as Funda, Kamernet, and Pararius are also reliable sources to search for private apartments and rooms. However, it is important to note that to avoid scams; it is recommended to make in-person visits to potential accommodations, or to depend on reliable sources.

Moreover, as suggested by many students studying there, proper financial management alongside the understanding of efficient budgeting is very critical. Due to the high cost of living in the Netherlands, financial management is crucial. While travelling, students should create a budget for costs and sundry expenses such as groceries, transportation, extracurricular activities, and unanticipated bills in addition to rent, which varies significantly based on the area and kind of housing. Furthermore, students need to adjust to the educational atmosphere in addition to learning money management. Self-study, group projects, and critical thinking are all prioritized in the Dutch educational system, which can be a big change from other educational systems. Hence, time and money management stands at the forefront of priorities when settling in the Netherlands. Utilize academic resources like libraries,

study groups, and faculty office hours, and do not hesitate to seek help from professors, academic advisors, or fellow students if you are struggling. Therefore, embrace the interactive and student-centred approach, and involve yourselves through group work, presentations, and independent research.

Another important part of understanding the local culture is being able to tell the difference between “cafes” and “coffee shops”. This is one aspect highlighted by students when interviewed about their experiences. Quite contrasting to what the name suggests, coffee shops are businesses that are authorized to sell small amounts of cannabis for individual use. They must abide by stringent rules set forth by Dutch law. They are mainly, laid-back locations where customers can purchase and consume cannabis on-site, and consumers must be at least 18 years old to enter and make purchases there. Cafes, on the other hand, resemble what many may consider to be eateries or coffee shops. They are social places where you can meet friends, study, or simply just unwind. They also serve coffee, tea, snacks, and light meals. Cannabis is not sold in cafes. Recognizing this difference will help you avoid any inadvertent trips to a coffee shop when you’re just looking for a place to enjoy a cup of coffee.

There are many more aspects that we as students must look forward to, in order for a seamless transition into our “new norm”.

As a result, the following checklist has been created with the suggestions of students who are currently studying and living in the Netherlands:

• **Visa and residence permit:** En-

sure you have the correct visa and residence permit. Check with the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND) for specific requirements.

• **Accommodation:** Secure housing before arrival. Aim to get access to university housing offices, or else, try searching on trusted rental websites

• **Health Insurance:** Obtain Dutch health insurance or confirm if your current insurance is valid in the Netherlands.

• **Bank Account:** Open a Dutch bank account to manage your finances conveniently.

• **Public transportation:** Get an OV-chipkaart for easy access to public transport.

• **Language course:** Enrol in a Dutch language course to facilitate smoother integration.

• **Emergency contacts:** Keep a list of emergency contacts, including your university’s international office, local embassy, and nearby hospitals.

There are a few more additional pointers to have in mind when shifting. The cycling culture is very popular in the Netherlands, so it is a great investment to purchase a decent bike and also become familiar with the customs and regulations specific to riding in the area.

Some other things that are important to keep in mind are as follows:

• The legal drinking age in the Netherlands is 18 years old, so keep that in mind when you attend social events.

• Keep note of the Dutch emergency. The number **112** on your phone is crucial in case of an emergency.

• You might want to get a Dutch SIM card since many companies like KPN, Vodafone, and T-Mobile have a variety of affordable plans.

• Since the Netherlands is a small country with variations in public transport, it is recommended that you take advantage of the chance to tour the nation. Rich cultural and recreational opportunities can be found in cities like The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht, as well as in the gorgeous countryside and coastal regions.

By preparing adequately and being aware of the potential challenges, international students can have a rewarding and enriching experience in the Netherlands. Embrace the journey, stay open to new experiences, and make the most of your time in this beautiful and welcoming country.



THE HOTTEST YEAR EVER!



BY ARTI BULLAND

In recent years, global temperatures have continuously broken many records, marking a concerning trend in climate change. This year has been predicted to continue this alarming trend. Global warming is causing significant changes in climate patterns worldwide. The rising temperatures are not only altering weather patterns, but they are also posing severe risks to the livelihoods, health, and overall stability.

It is predicted that 2024 is the fourth consecutive year of record breaking heat temperatures. The years leading up to 2023 have each set new records for global temperatures, with 2020 through 2023 consecutively reaching unprecedented highs. Glaciers and ice are melting at high rates contributing to an increase in rising sea levels that pose a threat to the coastal environment and ecosystem. The earth is warming at twice a faster rate, which has an adverse effect on people's lives. This rise and escalation in heat is primarily due to human activities including the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation for construction purposes, and the excessive transportation on roads, which have significantly increased the greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere contributing to global warming.

The rising temperatures are not only a matter of gradual warming, but also lead to more frequent and intense extreme weather events. Hurricanes, in particular, have become more destructive as warmer ocean temperatures provide more energy for these storms. This is a significant concern for small island nations that are heavily reliant on external aid and resources. The increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes threaten infrastructure, disrupt economies, and pose severe risks to the populations of the islands.

The warming oceans not only contribute to stronger hurricanes but also to coral bleaching and fisheries collapse, further impacting food security and tourism dependent economies. And the corals play an important role in the tourism industry, as tourists come to the Caribbean mainly for the "sun, sea, and sand" and underwater attractions, which are the beautiful coral reefs in the Caribbean Sea. These are being severely impacted due to the warmer ocean temperatures as they are highly sensitive to temperature changes.

Children and elderly are particularly vulnerable to the effects of extreme heat. Prolonged exposure to high temperatures can lead to heat re-

lated illnesses, including heat exhaustion and heatstroke. Moreover, persons with respiratory conditions such as asthma are at higher risk, as extreme heat can intensify their symptoms. Additionally, warmer temperatures can increase the spread of vector-borne diseases, as the mosquitoes that transmit these diseases thrive in warmer climates.

The record-breaking heat of recent years highlights the severe and

growing impacts of climate change. The effects on persons and vulnerable island nations illustrate the urgent need for global action to mitigate and adapt to these changes. Without significant efforts to reduce emissions and enhance resilience, the world will continue to face increasingly terrible consequences of climate change.

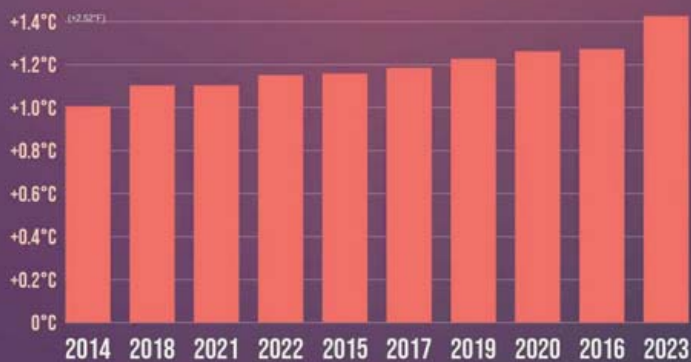
Tips to stay safe and beat the heat

- Drink lots of fluids and stay hydrated at all times.
- Wear hats and sunglasses, and use an umbrella when outdoors.
- Put sunscreen to protect your skin and to prevent it from getting sunburnt.
- Wear light coloured clothing to prevent absorbing too much heat.
- Limit outdoor activities, especially when the sun is at its peak.

Tips to prevent the contribution to global warming

- Reduce, Reuse and Recycle items to prevent the production of new products.
- Use more biodegradable items, which decompose quicker and are not harmful to the environment.
- Plant more trees to have better air quality.
- Use public transportation, walk, bike or carpool, if possible, to prevent unnecessary traffic on the road which will reduce the exhaust from vehicles.
- Use renewable sources of energy as well as energy efficient appliances.

10 HOTTEST GLOBAL YEARS ON RECORD



Global temperature anomalies (°C) averaged and adjusted to early industrial baseline (1851-1910). Data as of 1/12/2024. Source: NASA GISS & NOAA NCEI



HOW TO FIND YOURSELF

BY ISABELLA CARAZO G.

We are said to be born as blank slates, with the ability to become anything and anyone we want. Each life experience we go through, no matter how big or small, shapes us into the truest form of ourselves. These experiences turn into a painting in which every brush stroke, every colour, is unique and indispensable in creating an image of our genuine self. The problem is that this painting is rarely shown to the world. We are so occupied trying to fit in – whether to a standard in social media or in a group of friends – that we shy away from being authentic.

But how can we change that?

We often avoid situations that create big emotions, like sadness, anxiety, jealousy, or heartbreak, but these emotions are a part of life, and we should not be afraid. Only after you have lived through and gotten out of dark moments can you appreciate the beauty and greatness of the light. Life is like a movie: You need both the sad and happy parts to make sense of it. Taking away all the bad moments blocks your ability to be your honest and true self. Of course, you do not need to cry about everything and throw a tantrum in public, but do not bottle up your emotions. Find a place where you can freely express your emotions or a person who will give you a shoulder to cry on.

Whoever said, “Don’t care what people think,” was wrong; it is part of our nature to care about others. What we can do is surround ourselves with people who think well of us, people that love us and accept us for who we are. But you cannot expect others to do all the caring. You need to love and accept yourself as well. Stop putting yourself down, cut out people who are not good for your mental health, and learn to take breaks when you need them. Sometimes the world does get hectic, and having some me-time lets you achieve a much needed balance in your life.

Be thankful for the big and small things, especially the small ones. We often overlook small moments or interactions in our lives, but these interactions are necessary to shape us, our personality, and our identity. Reflect on them and be thankful for them, “I’m grateful my friend gave me a piece of gum.” The small things add up, and when you start to look for them, you will find they are everywhere. Of course, we cannot forget to celebrate the big stuff. Do not downplay your achievements; if you did your best at anything and you are proud of the result, celebrate. And

do not let anybody rain on your parade. Your achievements are worth it and valid – even if it is just another Tuesday for everybody else.

Remember, the world is trying to shape you to be like everyone else. Do not let it take away your individuality. Although it might be hard to overcome peer pressure and social media standards, do not forget your true identity. Let your

experiences, both good and bad, shape your values. Live your values and do not change them for anyone. Find the good things in your life and enjoy them. You are navigating the turbulent waters of life, but have faith, for you are aboard a boat steering you toward an island of genuine happiness, where you can embrace and celebrate your true self.



Youth job-hunting on St. Maarten



BY IVAN WU

On the island of St. Maarten where tourism plays a huge role in sustaining our economy, it can be undoubtedly said that the jobs on this island are greatly influenced by this factor. As a result, industries, including retail, food and beverage, hospitality and tour services, thrive on this island as they cater to tourists who are frequently willing to spend much more.

Due to the popularity of these industries, the youth of St. Maarten often find themselves searching for jobs in hotels, markets, airports, tour services and other fields that provide services to tourists.

How do the youth and jobs correlate with each other?
It is not uncommon for students to take summer jobs, or part-time jobs

on the weekends, to earn extra income to fund their personal needs or to help alleviate financial struggles at home. Whilst it may sound absurd, students do often find themselves in a situation where they are forced to enter the workforce to fund their school necessities. However, accessibility to certain kinds of jobs for the youth has been a struggle due to various external factors. A survey was conducted by *Teen Times* to investigate the overall restrictions that the youth had on St. Maarten in finding jobs.

The survey, which was structured to receive the perspectives of students towards job accessibility and their overall struggles of this experience, comprised the following five questions:

- 1: What type of job are you currently looking for, or have applied for in St. Maarten?
- 2: How easy would you say it is for a teenager – or a person who is currently looking for a job – to find job opportunities in St. Maarten?
- 3: What are the main challenges you have faced while looking for jobs here?
- 4: What resources have you used to help you find a job?
- 5: What do you think can be done to improve job accessibility for the youths of St. Maarten?

Some 30 plus responses were received and the results highlight that most youths search for jobs in the core sectors: hospitality, retail, and food. Plausible reasons for youths to select these jobs could be due to higher salaries, ease of access, family referrals or even the abundant number of jobs prevalent in these sectors. However, young job seekers are often met with obstacles when they try to secure their jobs. Given how simple these occupations are to enter and how little education, training, or experience they require, there may be intense competition for these positions. Additionally, tourism is often impacted by seasons, thus there are various high and low seasons where in low seasons certain positions are not needed, thus lower jobs.

The survey reveals a varied experience on the availability of jobs. A sig-

nificant number of people consider it “somewhat difficult” to find and apply for jobs in the specific sectors mentioned above. A recurring topic is the lack of opportunities specifically designed for young people without experience, as well as the necessity for more training and skill-development programs aimed at this demographic. Moreover, the survey underlines the significant challenges youths go through when looking for jobs and retaining their jobs. Majority of the participants highlighted the challenge of transportation issues, meaning they were unable to access a mode of transportation from their homes to their workplace. Although there are a lot of buses on our island, they only cover specific routes, and some may not cover specific locations. Another notable challenge was high competition for available jobs, which could suggest that older individuals in the workforce look for similar sector jobs, and this puts pressure on the youth because employers usually look for individuals with more experience.

Sixty percent of participants in the survey indicated that young people typically use social media platforms for searching jobs. Thus, governments and other organizations could use this resource to offer more job opportunities to the youth. The survey also offered the responders an opportunity to give their perspective on how we can improve job accessibility for the youth. The responders suggested workshops and training programs to improve the employability of teenagers, as well as the development of job positions reserved just for them. These recommendations demonstrate not only the need for more equal employment possibilities, but also the youth’s proactive attitude to removing these challenges.

Given these challenges, it is imperative that the public and private sectors of this island work towards a common goal to build a more inclusive labour market. All members of the community, not just those with the most experience, will profit from St. Maarten’s tourism industry if more youth-friendly jobs are created and skill development is encouraged.



DON'T FORGET HURRICANES!



BY ADITI RAJPAL

St. Maarten has an infamous history with a long list of catastrophic hurricanes, and we all know the hurricane season is approaching as the summer begins. This is a helpful guide to make sure you and your family are adequately prepared.

Develop a plan

- 1: Discuss possible evacuation routes with your family. If you have pets, find pet-friendly shelters or a safe place to stay with your family.
- 2: Have an emergency kit: Stock up on non-perishable food, water, first aid-supplies, medications, flashlights, batteries, a radio, can opener, and other essentials.
- 3: Prepare your home: Trim trees, secure loose outdoor furniture, and maybe consider installing hurricane shutters if you live in a high-risk area for

flooding or damage.

4: Secure your insurance: Check your insurance policies to determine if you have coverage for flooding/hurricane damage.

Make sure to stay informed about weather reports, government reports, and flood- and storm-warnings.

St. Maarten has had some terrifying hurricanes in the past, namely Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Luis. Our island has had a high frequency of hurricanes passing through; even though they don't always hit St. Maarten directly, as they usually hit about every four years. The storms that have directly hit tend to be quite strong. There have been multiple category 3 and higher hurricanes that have impacted St. Maarten in the recent decades, including Luis in 1995, Lenny in 1999, and Irma in 2017. Recently, in

2023, St. Maarten was brushed by a category 1 hurricane named Tammy. Nevertheless, Hurricane Irma left a devastating impact on St. Maarten, and was said to damage about 95% of the buildings here, which was extremely challenging in 2017 to most residents.

Another one of the catastrophic hurricanes that left great destruction was Hurricane Luis. Hurricane Luis was a category 4 hurricane, with power-

ful winds and heavy rain that lasted for over 24 hours. This resulted in significant damage roughly about 60% of the area. Thousands were left homeless as well, with some places lacking basic needs like water and power for months. Since these terrible disasters have occurred, it is important to prepare as best as we can for the upcoming hurricane season.



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Samarpan A Bharatanatyam Dance Recital

BY LEHAR MARATA AND SUHANI NATHUMAL

On Sunday, May 19, people from all over our multicultural island gathered at the Belair Community Center to enjoy "Samarpan" – a Bharatanatyam recital, organized by Naatya Arts Center Foundation.

What Bharatanatyam is

Bharatanatyam is one of the Indian classical dance forms that originates from Tamil Nadu, a state in South India. The word *Bharatanatyam* is derived from two Sanskrit words: *Bharata* and *Natyam*. *Bharata* is a mnemonic for *Bha* which means *bhava/emotions*; *Ra* which means *raga/melody*; and *Ta* which means *tala/rhythm*.

The Sanskrit word *Natyam* means dance. Hence, the word *Bharatanatyam* means a dance that expresses emotions, melody, and rhythm.

Preparing for the recital

Naatya Arts Center Foundation began preparing for their big end-of-year recital months in advance. Students from the various batches were trained once or twice a week for many months, which eventually led up to this big day. Teachers Aparna Samaga and Inessa Careto, also called the gurus of the foundation, worked tirelessly to organize the wonderful event. From choreographing to making

all the necessary arrangements for the event, the dynamic duo did it all! And, of course, the students' hard work cannot go unnoticed. The students participating in this recital attended classes regularly to learn the various compositions they were going to perform at the recital. Leading up to the event, the students also had to attend multiple practices and stage rehearsals along with the other



batches to ensure a smooth-flowing show.

The big day – Samarpan

On May 19, the Belair Community Center hall was filled with an excited audience awaiting the graceful performances about to be presented by the students. The evening started with all students reciting the invocatory prayers (*shlokas*) and performing the prayer step which is how each class starts. Following the prayers, Ms. Inessa and Ms. Aparna lit up the stage with their flawless performance. The dances after that were performed by students of varying age groups (ages 4 to 18). The older students performed various traditional compositions, such as *Alaripu* and *Jathiswaram*, which are essential components of a Bharatanatyam recital.

In addition to all the phenomenal dance pieces performed by the students, Naatya Arts Center decided to add a unique touch to their recital this year, with a special Carnatic music per-

formance. This spectacular performance was presented by Abhiram Lulla alongside Mr. Naresh Arora. Abhiram is currently receiving online Carnatic voice lessons from Guru Vinutha Sridhar from New Jersey. For the final performance of the beautiful evening, several students from the different batches performed a storytelling performance of the *Ramayana*, as a tribute to the consecration of the *Ram Mandir* in *Ayodhya* in *January 2024*.

During this cultural event, the audience enthralled themselves with the delightful performances with intricate dance steps and vibrant costumes. The recital concluded with a certificate ceremony honouring the talented students, followed by a concluding speech by the driving force behind the entire program, Ms. Aparna. Dignitaries, such as Mr. Danny Ramchandani and Mr. Damodar Rawtani, gave speeches praising the show and admiring the talent brought and shared to the island by Ms. Aparna and Ms. Inessa. Overwhelmed with emotions, Ms. Aparna's eyes filled with joyful tears as she expressed her gratitude. The evening ended on a high note – the sounds of bells (*ghungroos*), clinking bangles, and rhythmic tapping on the stage came together to create a mesmerizing end to a wonderful show.





MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS DURING EXAM TIME

BY ALISAH KIRTON

5 WAYS TO MANAGE MENTAL HEALTH



STRESS MANAGEMENT



TALK TO PEOPLE



SLEEP WELL



STAYING ACTIVE & EXERCISING



HEALTHY EATING HABITS

Exam season can be challenging for students, but it is doable with the correct approach. Anxiety, pressure, and restless nights are common symptoms during exam season for many students, but it is important to keep in mind that you should not put your mental health and wellbeing at risk. When handling exam-related stress, it is crucial to know the stress indicators and implement suitable coping mechanisms.

Supporting students during this period requires focusing on mental health awareness and promoting healthy coping mechanisms. Reducing stress levels is as easy as establishing a routine, being mindful, exercising regularly, eating well, and reaching out to friends and family for help. Additionally, breaking up your study sessions regularly will keep your mind and body healthy.

• **Get into a pattern.**

Make a study plan to feel more in control and less anxious. To effectively manage exam stress, students should make a study timetable, set realistic goals, plan their studies, prioritize exercise, and get seven to nine hours of sleep every night. They should also maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Try deep breathing exercises, meditation, or progressive muscle

relaxation to relax the body and mind. The Pomodoro Technique recommends working for 25 minutes, taking a 5-minute break, and finally, a lengthier 15- to 30-minute rest while studying for exams. Do something to recharge your battery within, like going for a stroll, stretching, or listening to music.

• **Learn to relax and be mindful.**

Deep breathing exercises, meditation, and gradual muscle relaxation are all great ways to ease tension and settle the mind. Improving focus and overall wellbeing can be achieved by incorporating mindfulness activities into regular routines.

• **Keep moving.**

Exercising regularly releases feel-good endorphins, improving your mood and giving you more energy. Refreshing one's mind and spirit might be as simple as going for a brief stroll or doing some stretching exercises.

• **Eat right.**

Eating a well-rounded diet with plenty of fresh produce, healthy grains, lean meats, and other nutrients may do

wonders for your physical and mental wellbeing. Stay away from sugar and coffee in excess; they might cause energy dumps and anxiety.

• **Maintain relationships.**

Having people around you that you can lean on in times of need is invaluable. Maintaining relationships with loved ones and acquaintances might help alleviate loneliness by providing a safe space to discuss feelings.

• **Establish realistic objectives.**

To avoid feeling overwhelmed and to achieve a sense of fulfillment, it is recommended to divide the study material into digestible portions and to make goals that are both challenging and achievable.

• **Get help from a mental health professional.**

If you are feeling overwhelmed by stress and worry, it is important to seek the advice of a mental health expert. Counselling services are a great resource when you need help coping with the stress that comes with exams. Get help from a trained expert if your stress levels are too high and getting in the way

of your daily life and preventing the completion of the most basic tasks. Counselling services are available on campus at many schools, where students can get help from trained mental health professionals.

If you are feeling down, keep in touch with loved ones or classmates to talk things out and get some support. Learning can be more fun and less lonely when you work with other people in study groups. You must take breaks often if you want to keep your mind healthy and your productivity levels high. Hence, taking a break allows your brain to recharge and digest new information, improving performance, decreasing stress, and keeping you from getting tired. Take advantage of downtime by reading, pursuing a hobby, or visiting loved ones – activities that bring you joy and relaxation.

The exam period might pose difficulties for students, but it can be effectively handled by prioritizing mental health awareness and adopting good coping strategies. Implementing regular schedules, cultivating mindfulness, engaging in physical activity, maintaining a nutritious diet, and getting assistance from loved ones can enhance one's quality of life, scholastic achievements, and managing stress. Ensuring good mental health is equally crucial as dedicating time to preparing for examinations. Students can effectively navigate this demanding period by adopting healthy coping strategies, taking regular breaks, and seeking support from their networks. Emphasizing the importance of mental wellbeing is essential for achieving success and long-lasting satisfaction.



THE SEASON OF PROMPOSALS

BY JAHZARA PAYNE

Prom season is coming up for high school seniors all over the world, especially the ones on St. Maarten. Prom is where you spend one of the very few last days with your classmates. Even though it is a bittersweet moment, you should not spend the night sad and thinking about the future. Prom is for you to wind-down from all the hard work you have done and have fun with the people you came to the event with.

Normally, it is tradition to go to Prom with a date; however, that does not necessarily mean only a significant other. Your friend or friends can also be your date to Prom. Prom is amazing when you go with friends, because you are with the people that make you happy, as they are the people that are always there when you are sad or going through a hard time along your journey.

When it comes to asking someone to Prom, some would simply ask them in a normal conversation, while others would do a grand gesture to commemorate the special moment. These grand gestures are called “promposals”. A promposal is a fancy and imaginative manner for a person to invite someone else to the Prom. It is not the same as the typical Prom ask, which is usually in the form of the simple question: “Will you go to Prom with me?”

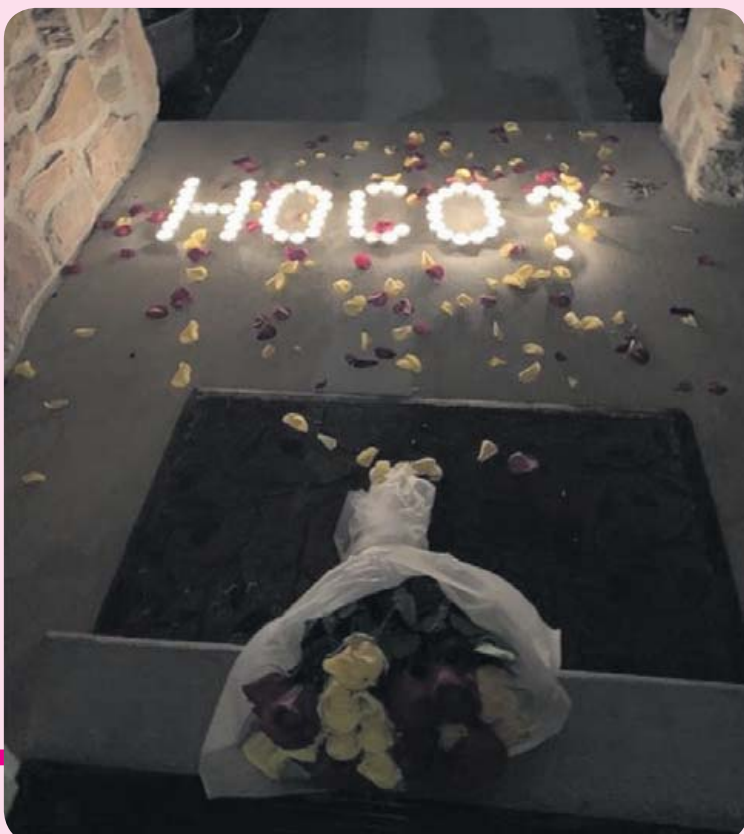
Between the late 2000s and the early 2010s, the word “prom-

posal” first appeared. Social media was a major factor in this tradition’s rise in popularity. In one month in 2011, almost 20,000 Prom videos were uploaded. When it comes to creating a promposal, some people would not have a clue where to start. There are many ideas that can inspire them to decide what to do. Here are some examples:

- Write out “Will you go to Prom with me?” on a big paper and design it nicely.
- Use catch phrases, quotes, or something sentimental that is related to the theme of your promposal to ask your partner/friend.
- Write out PROM with things that are beautiful and elegant, for example rose petals, candles, or lights.
- Have some of your classmates around you give the person roses until they reach you and then ask them.
- Buy them their favorite food or snack and ask them if they would like to go to Prom with you by writing it out nicely on the packaging or gift wrap.

These are some cute ideas if you are planning to do a promposal for the 2024 Prom or for a future Prom event. These are just a few ideas to inspire you, as you have the freedom and imagination to take your ideas to the next level.

If you were not planning on doing a promposal, I urge you to think about it. Who knows, it can be the best one on the island or simply a memorable moment. Remember, you can ask your friends too!



HAITI: A NATION IN CRISIS



BY SUHANI NATHUMAL AND LEHAR MARATA

Haiti, a nation located in the northern Caribbean, was once hailed as the “La Perle des Antilles” (The Pearl of the Antilles) because of its natural beauty and wealth. However, today it finds itself amidst a deepening political, economic, and social crisis. Upbeat music and lively markets that once filled the streets are now replaced by the deafening sounds of gunfire and cries for help. The assassination of President Jovenel Moïse was only the beginning; since then, Haiti has been stuck in an uncontrollable turmoil, leaving its people in a desperate situation.

The political unrest in Haiti is at

an all-time high. During President Moïse’s time in office, accusations of corruption and economic mismanagement, and anti-government protests calling for his resignation were common. When he was assassinated, Haiti was plunged further into political uncertainty. However, with struggling to gain control, the ongoing protests, rising gang violence, and calls for democratic elections, Ariel Henry was then appointed as Interim President. Public annoyance increased as the promised elections were frequently postponed. In response to the escalating crisis, the United Nations increased its efforts and put more pressure on Haiti to

resolve the issue quickly and hold a timely and transparent election.

Despite the numerous attempts to bring peace amongst Haiti, gang violence persists, especially in cities like Port-au-Prince. Kidnappings for ransom, extortion, and conflicts between competing gangs contribute to the instability of the country. As time continues and the situation worsens, the residents begin to question the government’s capacity to protect its people. At this point, Haiti is considered to be facing a humanitarian crisis. On March 11, Mr. Ariel Henry resigned his position as the unelected president of Haiti. This resignation was

a result of non-stop threats by gang members of civil war and genocide. The power was handed over to a transitional council which seeks to regain control of the violence-ruled nation. The economic situation in Haiti is declining alongside its political situation. The country is experiencing high inflation resulting in the inability of families to purchase basic goods. Additionally, unemployment is rampant, and individuals are struggling. International aid organizations are tirelessly spreading awareness about the growing humanitarian crisis. There is a severe lack of access to healthcare, education, and clean water. As Haiti faces increasing challenges, urgent assistance is important now more than ever to help its people through these difficult times and pave the way for a better future.

Haiti is confronting a devastating storm of political unrest, economic struggles, and urgent humanitarian needs. With no government to lead the nation and the streets overrun by gang violence, the people of Haiti are running low on resilience and determination. The world extends a hand in aid, striving for a better future with stability and hope.



WHY SO MANY TEENAGERS SUPPORT PALESTINE

BY CONTRIBUTOR POOJA BHALLA

- THE SPECTATOR PUBLICATION -



I'm a sixth-former in one of Britain's largest comprehensives and know no one who supports Israel over Palestine. Some readers might find that shocking. Consider, though, how my generation gets its news. TikTok is today by far the number one source of news for teenagers; YouTube is next, Instagram third. Studies show the average teen spends two hours every day glued to their screens. Few my age buy or read a newspaper, or would ever think of doing so. Even the idea of sitting down to watch television news seems alien to us. We view the world through smartphones; we understand current affairs through video snippets.

In theory, the videos TikTok shows you relate to what you have previously watched: if the algorithm sees that you like something, it gives you more. It's designed to be addictive. One survey found that just over half of teenagers, who go on TikTok, use it for news. There are almost no checks and balances to make sure that what TikTokers see is fair, balanced or accurate.

I have come across many videos about the war on my TikTok "for you" page and I can confidently say that I've only seen pro-Palestinian ones. If such material were all assembled in a newspaper or a TV channel, it would look like pretty hard core propaganda.

"If you're not pro-Palestine, we're not friends," declares a girl on TikTok who is about my age. "If you're neutral right now, we're not friends. If you're too uneducated to have an opinion, we're not friends... 'Your neutrality is your complacency.'" To be socially acceptable to her, then, you need to support Palestine against Israel. To venture that the conflict is complicated is to be "uneducated".

"Palestinians are willing to die for this land because they are

native to it," says another video. "If Israelis were native to it, they wouldn't bomb it." The conflict is seen through the prism of occupier and occupied. The hashtag "Stand with Palestine" has more than 4.2 billion TikTok views associated with it – about ten times more than those associated with the hashtag "Stand with Israel."

In the US, almost half of TikTok users are under 30, and it shows. Under each video are comments, and when it comes to Israel-Palestine, the constant refrain is that the war is racism at work. It's the Black Lives Matter mindset applied to geopolitics: If you support Israel, you're white. If you're concerned about anti-Semitism, you're white. The conflict is framed as white power (bad) vs diversity (good), and the Arabs are represented by the latter.

I've asked some of my peers why they support Palestine so strongly. Most say Israel is committing genocide and is purposefully targeting innocent people. They reference countless online videos showing horrific scenes in Gaza, often showing violence against children. They say they have never seen a video of an Israeli child suffering. What about the Israeli children, even babies, killed and brutalised

on October 7? I'm surprised by how many say the Hamas attacks were justified because Israel has made Palestinians suffer for generations. Retaliation was overdue, they feel.

Do they acknowledge that Hamas is regarded as a terrorist organisation the world over? Do they know that Hamas is committed to the total eradication of Israel? Few seem to care. Or they mistrust the story: More lies spun by the old "official" media, which they regard as horribly biased in favour of Israel.

There aren't many signs of my generation changing our viewing

habits as we get older. If anything, the reverse is happening: older people are joining us, especially on YouTube and Instagram, platforms that have moved in TikTok's direction by driving more users towards bitesize videos. These videos are not produced by huge influencers with millions of followers: Just teens, who are active on TikTok, looking to take a stand and boost their following. The BBC or Sky News do produce TikTok-friendly videos, but they struggle to compete with short, opinion-filled "hot takes" from teens in their bedrooms.





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