

TEENTIMES 30

FOR THE YOUTH, BY THE YOUTH!

NOVEMBER 2025

**MORE THAN
JUST A RIDE**

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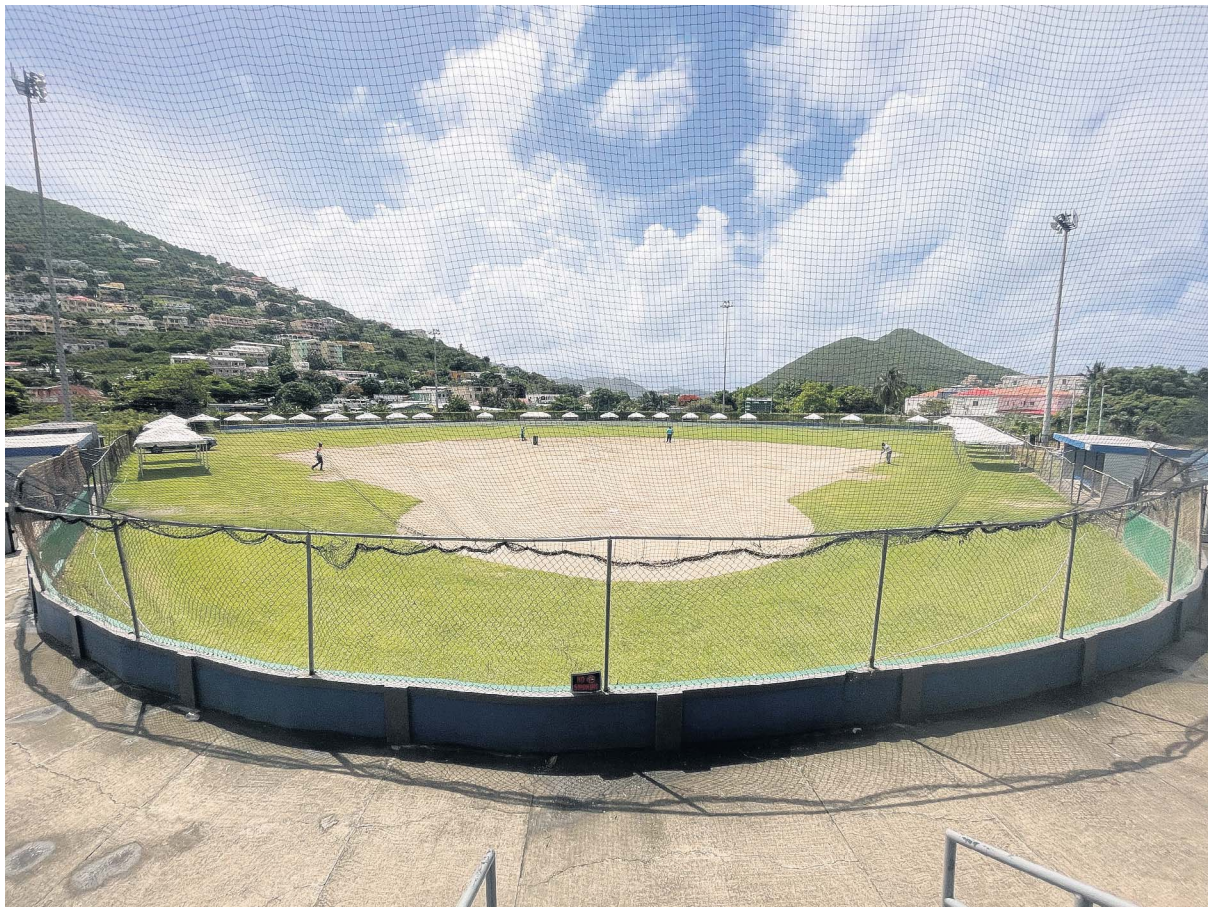
WHAT'S GOING ON WITH JOHN COOPER JOSE LAKE SR. BALLPARK?

In recent months, many community members have noticed a marked improvement in the condition of the John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark. The National Sports Institute (NSI) has clearly invested in the field, setting up a batting cage, installing lighting and performing routine maintenance. These efforts should ideally signal a revival of local sports activity. Yet a puzzling question remains: Why is the John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark not accessible to the public for everyday use?

Despite these upgrades, residents are reporting that the ballpark remains locked or restricted when not in use for official softball competitions. There are no open training sessions, no community members working out, and no young athletes practicing, even though the space appears to be well-prepared for daily use.

COMPARING FIELDS

Erwin Baco Richardson "Little League" Field vs. John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark



This issue becomes even more confusing when compared to the Erwin Baco Richardson "Little League" Field, which remains open and accessible to the public throughout the day. Children and adults alike can be seen using the field for informal games, personal training, or simply enjoying the space.

This raises some serious questions:

- Why do we have two functioning fields, but only one is being used by the public?
- Is there a policy that prevents open access to the John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark?
- Who is making these decisions and why?

Many residents understandably assume that John Cooper

Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark, like other public fields, should be accessible for general community use. If public funds or national sports programs are involved in maintaining it, shouldn't the field be open to the public – especially local youth who want to train and grow in the sport?

The lack of transparency around field access creates confusion and frustration. Sports infrastructure is vital for youth development, community bonding, and healthy lifestyles. When a field is maintained but not actively used, that investment loses value.

ACCESS TO JOHN COOPER JOSE LAKE SR. BALLPARK

It's unclear who exactly is

responsible for granting or denying access to the John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark. Some possible points of contact might include the following:

- National Sports Institute (NSI), if they manage the field.
- The Local Division of Sports and Recreation.
- Any local softball or baseball association that organizes competitions there.

Who do we talk to about using the ballpark? Is there a booking system? Is permission needed? And if so, why hasn't this been communicated clearly to the public?

This situation calls for clarity and fairness. If John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark is truly a public facility, the following

should apply:

- Transparent guidelines on how and when the field can be used.
- Open access hours for community training and practice.
- Opportunities for youth programs and community leagues to make better use of the space.

Having two quality fields and

only using one makes little sense – especially when the community is eager to participate in sports and recreational activities.

It's time for those responsible to open up the conversation and help ensure that John Cooper Jose Lake Sr. Ballpark serves the community, not just competitions.



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When scooters become more than just a ride

Picture a hot afternoon – scooters zooming past, boys doing tricks in and out of traffic. For many, it is harmless fun, a sign of freedom and friendship; but for some, scooter riding has become more than a pastime. It is a daily routine that fills empty hours, a substitute for purpose. When opportunity feels distant – and hope even farther away – the scooter becomes an identity. It represents movement in a world that often feels stuck.

For some young men, that freedom can take a darker turn. The same mobility that offers escape from boredom can also make scooters tools for crime. Across the Caribbean, police have noted a rise in robberies and thefts involving scooters, where riders use their agility to flee quickly. It is not the scooter that causes crime, but the hopelessness and disconnection behind it that push some young men toward reckless choices.

The roots of this behaviour run deep. Many Caribbean boys face limited opportunities after leaving school. Youth unemployment across the region remains among the highest in the world, and without stable jobs or prospects, many young men begin to feel stuck in a cycle of waiting. The scooter offers an illusion of progress, a feeling of going somewhere, even if it is nowhere in particular. It becomes a way to fill the silence left by institutions that have failed them.

Recreation also plays a role. In neighbourhoods where there are few structured activities, no sports fields, and no youth centres, riding scooters becomes the main way to so-



cialize. The sense of belonging that comes from riding in a group replaces other forms of community. It becomes its own subculture, complete with rules, reputations, and hierarchies. The more time spent riding, the less connection there is to school, work, or family routines, and the harder it becomes to re-enter those spaces.

Masculine identity is another layer. For many young men, the scooter is a symbol of status and independence. In communities where few other symbols of success are available, the vehicle becomes proof of worth. It shows that you can move; that you can control something powerful. The thrill of speed, the attention it draws, and the respect it commands are difficult to give up. But when status is tied to risk,

stunts, or illegal activity, that sense of pride can easily slide into trouble.

The use of scooters in crime is often more about opportunity than intent. They are small, fast, and easy to hide. They allow a person to move through narrow streets and disappear in seconds. That advantage has made them tools in robberies and thefts, especially in areas where the presence of law enforcement is thin. Yet most young men who ride scooters are not criminals. They are young, restless, and uncertain about their future.

Behind many of these stories lies another issue – mental health. Across the Caribbean, reports show rising levels of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness among youth. Many feel excluded or invis-

ible, unable to find meaningful ways to contribute. When you feel unseen, you look for ways to be noticed. Riding all day is one form of expression. Crime, for a few, becomes another. Both grow from the same sense of disconnection.

This issue matters because the scooter culture reflects much more than traffic or noise. It reveals a generation's frustration. Constant riding exposes safety risks, legal troubles, and deep social divides. When society sees only the scooter and not the person riding it, it misses the story beneath, the young man searching for something to hold on to.

But it is not too late to shift that story. The same energy that fuels scooter culture can be redirected toward creativity and purpose. Across the

region, vocational training programs have shown success in reducing crime among marginalized youth. Giving boys the tools to earn an income or learn a trade helps replace hopelessness with pride. Communities that organize safe riding clubs, teach maintenance, and encourage skill-building show that the scooter itself is not the enemy. The problem is the lack of options.

Governments and communities must look beyond punishment and toward prevention. Creating youth employment, expanding apprenticeships, and including young men in policy discussions can help them feel seen. Mental health programs, mentorship, and youth centres can fill the spaces where frustration now grows. Even families have a role to play. A parent who asks questions, who notices that their child is riding more than usual, may discover early signs of disconnection that can still be repaired.

None of this means that scooter riding should disappear. It is part of the culture, part of how young people express freedom and friendship. What must change is what happens after the ride, whether it leads to opportunity or isolation.

If a young man spends all day on a scooter, it may be a signal that he needs more than a vehicle. He needs a reason. He needs someone to remind him that he can move forward in other ways too. The goal is not to take away the scooter, but to give him something larger to ride toward.



Feature

The price of growing up

How the cost of living shapes the lives of Caribbean teens

In living rooms, buses, and WhatsApp chats across the Caribbean, one topic keeps coming up among teens – money. Not in the shallow sense of wanting more of it, but in the heavy, practical way of realizing how hard it is to get and how quickly it disappears. For many young people, growing up in the Caribbean today means watching your family stretch every dollar, seeing bills pile up, and learning early that the cost of living shapes nearly everything – from your education to your dreams.

Teenagers are more financially aware than ever. They see parents working multiple jobs to cover rent, groceries, and transportation. They overhear late-night conversations about rising prices or how the next school term might be tight. The economy, once something abstract that adults talked about on the news, has become personal. It shows up when a light bill gets cut, when you have to reuse last year's textbooks, or when the school money just doesn't stretch far enough.

Across the Caribbean, the cost of living has quietly become one of the biggest pressures on families. The price of fuel has climbed and, with it, transportation cost. Food prices have jumped because many islands import most of what they eat. Rent, in some cases, rivals what people pay in parts of North America, while wages have hardly moved. These realities filter down to teens in countless small ways: Missed outings, postponed

school trips, and arguments about money that fill the air like background noise.

Some teens try to help by working part-time. A few take summer jobs in supermarkets, gas stations, or restaurants. Others do hair, babysit, or sell small items online to earn a little extra. But jobs are not easy to find, especially for young people without experience. Many Caribbean economies depend on tourism, construction or government work – sectors that rise and fall with the season or political climate. A teenager who wants to work may simply not find anywhere willing to hire them, and those, who do, often earn just enough to cover their own expenses.

This constant awareness of money changes the way Caribbean teens see adulthood. It creates a sense of realism early. Conversations that used to revolve around what you want to "become", now often include whether that path can actually pay the bills. A dream of studying abroad may be followed by the sobering question of who will pay for it, or whether it even makes sense to return home if local salaries can't sustain independence. The line between aspiration and affordability has never been thinner.

For some, this pressure pushes them



to hustle, to think creatively about how to survive and still build a future. Teenagers across the region are turning their skills into side businesses – graphic design, tutoring, photography, selling clothes or food, editing videos, or creating digital content. They are learning that earning even a little money brings freedom and pride. But there's also the risk of burnout and stress. Carrying financial responsibility too early can rob teens of the carefree years they deserve.

Families feel this shift too. Parents who once tried to shield their children from money worries now find they can't. It is impossible to hide a refrigerator that's half empty or a conversation about the electricity bill. Some teens develop empathy and gratitude from this exposure; others feel guilt or frustration. They want to help but can't. They want independence but depend on parents who are stretched thin. The emotional weight of money is heavy, even when no one talks about it.

This shared economic strain also affects social life. In a culture where connection and celebration are everything, being broke can be isolating. When friends are going out, attending concerts, or planning Carnival events, a teen without spending money feels left behind. That exclu-

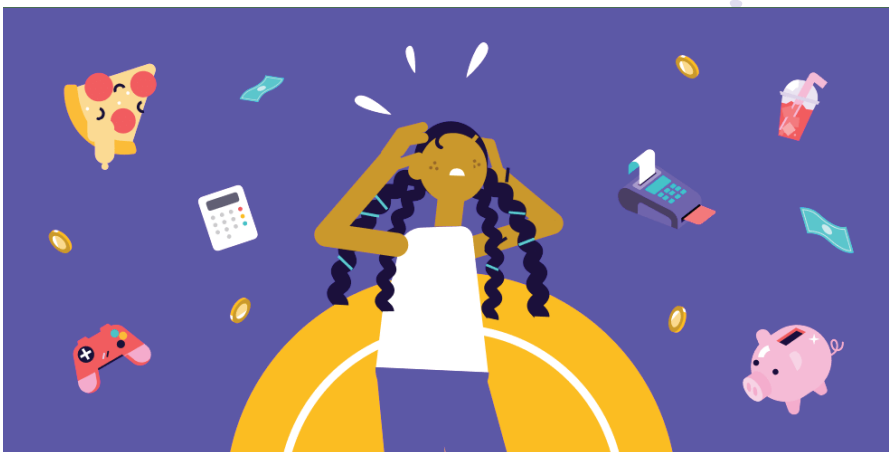
sion can feed self-doubt or resentment. Social media amplifies it further, making it seem like everyone else is doing fine while you're stuck worrying about bus fare or data credit.

Still, Caribbean teens are finding ways to adapt. Many have become more financially literate through necessity, tracking expenses, saving small amounts, and learning the value of money early. Schools and youth programs are slowly responding with lessons about budgeting, entrepreneurship, and financial independence. There is also a growing conversation about how to create more jobs and training opportunities for young people so that ambition does not have to die under the weight of daily costs.

The bigger question, though, is how this generation will be shaped by growing up in a time when everything feels more expensive and less certain. They are learning hard lessons early – that freedom costs money, that comfort is fragile, and that their parents' struggles are not just about mismanagement but about structural realities of small island economies. Yet they are also learning resilience, creativity, and the power of finding new paths in a region that has always survived through adaptation.

The cost of living is more than numbers on a government chart; it's the silent force shaping how Caribbean teens see their futures. It influences whether they stay or leave, whether they dream big or play it safe, whether they view money as a goal or a constant worry. But what stands out most is their awareness. They know the world has changed, and they are not naïve about it. Beneath the laughter, the parties, and the beach pictures, there's a generation quietly calculating, budgeting, and planning.

In the end, these teens are not just talking about money; they're talking about survival, opportunity, and dignity. The cost of living has forced them to see the world for what it is, but it has also prepared them to shape what it could become.



'I love my island, but I don't see a future for my career here.'

As many young people from Sint Maarten head abroad for college, university, or other reasons, one big question often comes up: Will you return home after your studies? For some, the answer is yes, but for most, the answer is no.

After speaking with several senior students from different high schools on the island, a clear pattern emerged. Many feel that returning to Sint Maarten after finishing school is not the best option for their future. The reasons vary – not because they don't love their island, but because they don't see a clear path if they return. Most responses were tied to jobs, money, and opportunity.

Limited job opportunities

A major concern is the lack of job options, especially for young people or those with specialized degrees. Some students would love to return, but there simply aren't enough jobs in their field. Others said that even when jobs are available, the pay is too low to match the high cost of living.

Financial struggles

Along with limited opportunities, many students said entry-level salaries don't allow for financial independence. Without strong financial support or affordable living expenses, it's hard to build a stable life after returning home.

Housing and cost of living

Finding affordable housing is another challenge. With few options and rising costs, many graduates feel they would struggle to afford life back home, especially without a stable job. Rent, food, and basic necessities must all be considered,

and inflation continues to make budgeting harder.

More opportunities abroad

Students agree that there are more opportunities overseas, both for education and career growth. Many plan to stay abroad to pursue additional training or better prospects in medicine, creative industries, or sports – fields that are difficult to advance in on the island.

Mixed feelings about home

While some feel disconnected or bored with island life, others still feel a strong emotional tie to Sint Maarten. A few said they might return for family reasons or for a quieter lifestyle, but many are unsure.

Voices from young minds

"I love my island, but I don't see a future for my career here."

"There is zero reason for me to come back, especially with my specialized field of study."

"I won't live, but I will visit."

"I would consider returning here, but only after retirement."

"I want to travel the world to learn more about different cultures and lifestyles."

It's clear that while many students love their home, they are thinking practically about their future. Some would return if they saw real opportunities or wanted to give back to their community. But for now, most believe their best chance for success lies elsewhere.

This doesn't mean they've given up on Sint Maarten; it means they're waiting for change. With more job opportunities, fair wages, and stronger support for young professionals, more of them might one day choose to come back home.



Students' and parents' perspective on Mental Health in St. Maarten

Many people in St. Maarten are starting to understand and talk more about mental health, especially students. Young people face a lot of pressure today – from family, school-work, social media, and worries about the future. On top of that, the island has gone through hard times – from Hurricane Irma, the Covid-19 pandemic, etcetera – which have affected families in many ways.

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

For many students, having good mental health means being able to stay focused, clam and happy, even if things around them aren't as happy all the time. Many students have admitted to often feeling anxious, down, or simply tired. Some find it hard to talk about their feelings to counsellors, parents or friends as they believe they will be judged, understood, or not taken seriously.

School stress, trying to fit in, and social media can make things worse for students. Mostly all schools offer counselling, but not every student feels safe or comfortable talking about their problems or seeking help. However, young people are starting to speak up, which helps break the silence and show that it's okay to not be okay.

How students can cope

Below are a few simple ways students can take care of themselves:

- Talk to someone you trust – a friend, parent, teacher, or counsellor.
- Take breaks and make time for things that make you happy.
- Stay active – play sports, dance, or walk outside.
- Get rest and eat well – your body and mind need energy.
- Relax your mind by listening to music, journaling, or deep breathing.
- Reach out for help if things feel too heavy: The Mental Health Foundation (MHF) of St. Maarten and school counsellors are there to support you.



PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

More parents are learning about mental health, while others are still in this learning phase. Some of the older generation grew up believing that stress and sadness were things to be kept private or simply "dealt with." Nowadays, with more education and awareness about mental wellness being taught on social media, in school, or through MHF, it's more widely recognized that mental wellness needs just as much attention as physical wellness.

Many parents are concerned about the pressures their children may face in school or on social media, but some are unsure about how to bring this topic up with their children. Some worry that counselling or access to professionals may not be available on the island. Still, discussions about mental issues between children and parents are slowly becoming more open.

When a child struggles with stress, anxiety, or sadness, it not only impacts that child but the parent as well. Many parents feel worried, helpless, or perhaps guilty, which,



in turn, affects their mental health. Parents should remember that caring for a child's emotional wellbeing can be draining, but they also need to work on maintaining their own mental wellness.

How parents can help

- Listen without judgment – give your child your undivided attention.
- Talk about emotions openly – normalize mental health discussions at home.
- Be patient and supportive – give

your child time to express their feelings.

- Seek professional help together – consult a counsellor or get advice from MHF.
- Model healthy habits – demonstrate healthy ways of managing stress.

When families come together, mental wellness can truly be a journey that both parent and child must take, allowing for a stronger, more understanding world.



The new generation's connection and disconnection with empathy

BY ALISAH KIRTON

It used to be easy to feel empathy. It was the quiet act of hearing someone out and understanding their pain without having to write about it. But in this day and age of global awareness and never-ending scrolling, empathy has changed into something much more difficult – something strong and fragile.

To put it simply, empathy means being able to understand and share someone else's feelings. It's what makes us people. But in a world driven by algorithms, short attention spans, and too much emotion, the next generation seems stuck between caring strongly and not caring at all. Young people today care – that much is obvious. They care loudly, clearly, and collectively. This group has turned empathy into action, whether it's in the fight against climate change, racism, or unfairness.

Young people, who wanted things to change, sparked movements like "Black Lives Matter." People used to think that social media was shallow, but now it's a digital megaphone for kindness. Millions of people can learn about a cause and show concern in just one post or tweet. A lot of people don't just feel pity; they act on it. It could be giving money to a cause, starting a petition, or showing support online. What it means to care has changed for the new age. They've shown that empathy can be global, different, and loud as hell.

The paradox is that the digital world that brings us together also wears us down. It gets harder to really feel pain when we see a lot of it online. It seems like every scroll brings a new tragedy, wrong, or disaster. And over



time, being exposed to this all the time can make us numb. You get tired when you care too much, too often, and can't make a difference. Psychologists call this "empathy fatigue."

A lot of young adults worry about problems happening around the world, but not nearly half of them feel emotionally linked to the people who are affected. Not that this group doesn't care, but they know how to keep themselves from caring too much. Now, social media has turned showing concern into a show. We feel like we've done our part when a sad post gets shared and a hashtag goes viral. But has empathy become more about looking like you care than actually connecting with someone?

With DMs, hearts, and emoji's, technology makes us feel close, but it often takes away the depth of real human feeling. When there are a lot of stories, it's easy for quiet voices to get lost. And it's harder to tell if someone is sincere when concern turns into contentment. To be honest, caring about other people now



has to fight with filters, trends, and algorithms. We skip over feelings faster than we can think about them.

But not everything is lost. In communities, schools, and youth groups, there is a growing understanding of how people feel. Mindfulness, emotional intelligence, and mental health workshops teach teens and young adults that being present, which means putting down the phone and paying attention, is the first step to understanding. This

change is already being led by some young people.

Volunteering, teaching, and planning community projects aren't things they do to get likes; they do them to make a difference. It's sensitivity that lives in the background, where it's quieter, deeper, and more important. So, that's the lesson: You don't have to show your concern to everyone. You only need to feel it.

The way this generation feels about humanity is both a warning and a sign of hope. Teenagers in Trinidad can cry for a kid in Gaza, and students in St. Maarten can stand up for a woman in Iran. This is the start of a global conscience. That is the most beautiful kind of understanding. Still, it serves as a warning that screens can't take the place of hearts.

Touch, eye contact, and quiet times when no one is watching are all things that can help people feel more empathy. The next big change won't be in technology; it will be in how people feel – because, in the end, the future needs more than just new ideas. It needs kindness. And the young people today still have a lot of it; they just need to know how to show it, not just post it.

Empathy isn't going away; it's just changing form. Will the digital world tell us how much we care? That's the question.





WHAT IS ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE?

BY SANA AGNANI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the capability of computer systems to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning and problem-solving. Instead of just following a fixed set of instructions, AI can learn from data and memory, recognize patterns and make decisions.

For example, when you use Google Assistant or Siri, that's AI understanding your voice and getting familiar with it. It stores memory for better user experience. When Netflix or YouTube recommends shows or videos you might like, that's AI creating an algorithm to attract users based on what they have previously seen.

Overall, AI aims to make machines competent of reasoning, learning and adapting, allowing them to act intelligently and efficiently in different situations. It's one of the most important areas of technology today, with many uses in research, business, education and everyday life.

Below are students and their experiences with AI:

Sana Agnani

My name is Sana Agnani, and I attend St. Dominic High – IB Year 1. AI can be used for various objectives – education, automation, entertainment, etc. I often use AI as a guide with my education if I struggle to comprehend a particular topic. I believe that AI can

be really accommodating once used with appropriate intention.

Lately, there have been viral videos regarding well-known people saying vulgar and improper things going around. They are always AI, but it can be misleading and sometimes difficult to detect whether it's real.

Although AI can help tremendously, people often overuse it for trivial things that can easily be handled. This is because people, mainly teens, rely on it to complete everything; this gradually slows down your thinking process. So, while AI is beneficial, it also comes with a negative side.

Meer Lalwani

My name is Meer Lalwani, and I am a second-year student of Cape at Sint Maarten Academy. I believe that AI has several positive impacts but is severely misused and taken for granted. I use AI daily to expand my knowledge and learn new skills. It's like a personal tutor wherever I get stuck or confused. It guides me and helps me learn from my mistakes so that I can improve.

I have seen AI being used for everyday tasks such as editing, creating audios, and writing letters. More than likely, it is misused regularly at school by almost every other student. But with enough emphasis brought upon how AI is misused and the dangers of it being misused, I think it's a great step ahead into our society and will



CHANAT KAPOOR

help shape the future.

Bhumi Dayalani

My name is Bhumi Dayalani, and I am a 4th form student at St. Maarten Academy. I consider AI to be a very useful tool if used wisely. I do use AI for my schoolwork, but I have never requested it to do the work for me. It is mostly used for fact checking my answers and for inspiration.

Some teachers do encourage the use of AI to an extent, but some completely prohibit it. I feel that AI is as smart as the person controlling it – as for now, it needs input to work. AI should be allowed for use, but in a controlled matter. It should not be used like Google, but instead as a form of assistance.

People around me have also used AI for a variety of reasons. I have even seen it used to see how a certain shoe would look in different colours. But my one advice is to not let it consume you by allowing it to do basic tasks and functions on behalf of yourself. That causes dependency on a machine which is extremely detrimental. In conclusion, I believe that AI is a very resourceful tool if used efficiently.

Chahat Kapoor

My name is Chahat Kapoor, and I am a student of St. Dominic High – IB Year 1. I believe that AI is a very helpful tool to find information and

to help students understand complex topics. Many students use it for the wrong reasons: allowing it to complete assignments instead of them putting in the hard work. Copying and pasting is ineffective as the student will never gain or benefit from it.

For the most part, it can help them do well on their academics temporarily, but in the long run, the students will find it difficult to rely on themselves since they're accustomed to using a machine to help them. Even though AI helps with education, it also has a negative role in society. There are several fake videos of celebrities going viral, mocking and imitating them to fool the internet.

Dextrina Skeete

My name is Dextrina Skeete, and I am a student of St. Dominic High – IB Year 1. I mainly use AI for school, and I think it's very important because it helps guide you when you're unsure about a certain topic. Although, it's a very helpful tool, I believe copying all the information directly from AI is a bad idea.

If students rely on that, they can become too dependent on it, and when given the exam, students won't know how to solve problems on their own. I think schools should encourage the use of AI as a learning guide, but students should still make sure that they understand the material themselves.



DEXTRINA SKEETE

The start of something new: My experience in the CAFY Program at USM

Being part of the first ever CAFY program at the University of St. Martin feels like being part of history in the making. This program also extends to students in Saba and Statia, where students can join the classes online and be just as much invested in conversations and debates as we are when we are in class. It's exciting to know that we're the first group of students to experience this new opportunity.

A program that allows us to have a normal college experience in the day with different courses, CAFY gives us the space to determine not only what we want to study in, but what career we would like to pursue and who we want to be in the future. The CAFY program is truly one of a kind, and it's giving us a head start on our future while still allowing us to enjoy the journey. And that's exactly what it does – it opens doors.

The program has two semesters. In the first semester, we take subjects like sociology, English, Dutch, history, FDS, and student success. These classes help us understand more about ourselves, our society, and our place in the world. The second semester is even more exciting because it focuses on careers and helps us figure out what we want to do in the future. It's a great balance between learning academically and preparing for real life. One thing I really like about this program is the environment.

My class is full of energy and fun and ambition; the age range is from 16 to 21 and everyone brings something different to the table. We laugh together, share ideas, and encour-



age each other to do our best. Even though we have fun, we still get our work done. It's a space where we all feel comfortable being ourselves, and that's what makes it so special. It's not just a class; it's like a small family. Our teachers make a big difference too.

The directors of the program – Ms. Marva Sam and Ms. Stacey James – have done an amazing job creating something that truly works for young people like us. They've given us the chance to grow, to learn, and to be-

lieve that we can reach higher. Some of the teachers that work with us are Ms. Marcelina Henry, Ms. Canterbury, and Ms. Charlea Joseph. They're supportive, kind, and always make learning fun and easy to understand.

It's nice to have teachers who not only teach, but also care about how we're doing as students and as individuals. This program means a lot to me because it gives hope for the future of St. Martin. By investing in young people, the CAFY program is building a stronger and more educated generation. It's helping us prepare to take on leadership roles, start careers, and give back to our island.

Programs like this can change lives

and not just for the students in them, but for the entire community. If more young people join and take it seriously, it could really shape the future of education and job opportunities in St. Martin and be a real change. Being a part of the CAFY program has already taught me so much, not just about school subjects but also about discipline, teamwork, and believing in myself.

I'm proud to be in this program, and I'm excited to see where it takes me and my classmates. We're not just learning for today; we're preparing for tomorrow. The CAFY program is more than just an education; it's a stepping stone toward a brighter future for us and for St. Martin.



Feature

**THE HIGHEST
FORM OF
KNOWLEDGE
IS EMPATHY**



PINK RIBBONS

On an international level, one in 20 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime; and by 2050, if the current rates continue, there will be 3.2 million new cases of breast cancer and 1.1 million deaths each year.

Countries with a low Human Development Index (HDI) will be hit the hardest by this growth. The HDI is simply a review of how well people are doing in three main areas of human development: 1) living a long and healthy life, 2) being knowledgeable, and 3) having a good standard of living.

One of the most popular cancers in women is breast cancer. It occurs when breast cancerous cells spread and develop into tumours. A tumour may spread from your breast to other parts of your body in about 80% of invasive breast cancer cases.

Every October, pink ribbons appear everywhere, from T-shirts to social media posts to school fundraisers. However, there is a serious cause beyond the colours and phrases – it is the month of raising awareness of breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society and Imperial Chemical Industries, a manufacturer of breast cancer medications that is now a part of AstraZeneca, partnered to launch Breast Cancer Awareness Month in 1985. It was first developed to encourage women to have regular mammograms (an X-ray of the breast), but it has since grown to include funding, research, and treatment.

Not only does breast cancer often affect women who are 50 years old or older, but it can also strike women who are younger than 50 years old. Young women, who are diagnosed with breast cancer between the ages of 18 and 45, are said to have early-onset breast cancer.

Although many teenagers believe it only affects adults, early education can have a significant impact. However, it is less likely in young women than in those over 45. Early-onset breast cancer accounted for almost 10% of new female breast cancer diagnoses between 2012 and 2016.

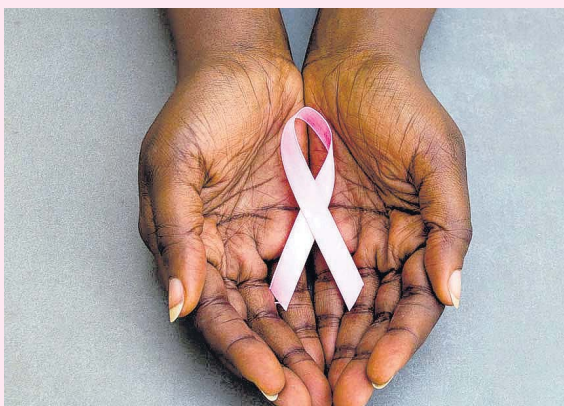
Women usually come to mind when most people think of breast cancer. However, breast tissue in men can potentially develop into cancer. If you're male, it's easy to brush off a breast lump as nothing because it's so uncommon, but it's crucial to have a medical professional examine any suspicious lumps.

Researchers have researched several risk factors that can increase your chances of developing breast cancer. These include genetics, smoking, drinking alcoholic beverages, having obesity and radiation exposure. There is no practice to prevent breast cancer from developing at any age; that is why it is encouraged to be cautious of any lumps or unusual changes in the breast. You have the highest chance of receiving effective therapy if you receive a diagnosis early.

Symptoms of breast cancer include the following:

- Lumps in your armpit or breasts.
- Mastalgia, or breast pain.
- Alterations to your breast's skin, such as skin rash, dimpling, or redness.
- Inverted nipple.
- Either nipple pain or nipple discharge.
- Swelling in the lymph nodes.
- Oedema or thickening of your nipple or breast skin.

A breast self-exam is an early detection technique that looks for breast cancer symptoms and indicators by combining visual and physical checks of the breasts. Learning how your breasts typically feel and look is the goal of breast self-examination. Breast self-examination should be done a few days following the end of a woman's menstruation if she is



still menstruating; and for postmenopausal women, it should be done on the same day of every month.

Steps to performing a breast self-exam

1: In the shower, examine the entire breast and armpit region using the pads or flats of your three middle fingers, using gentle, medium, and firm pressure. Every month, examine both breasts and feel for any changes, such

as firm knots, thickenings, or new lumps.

2: In front of a mirror, visually examine your breasts while keeping your arms at your sides. Look for any changes in the nipples, dimpling, swelling, or other skin irregularities on or around the breasts, or any changes in the breasts' form or contour.

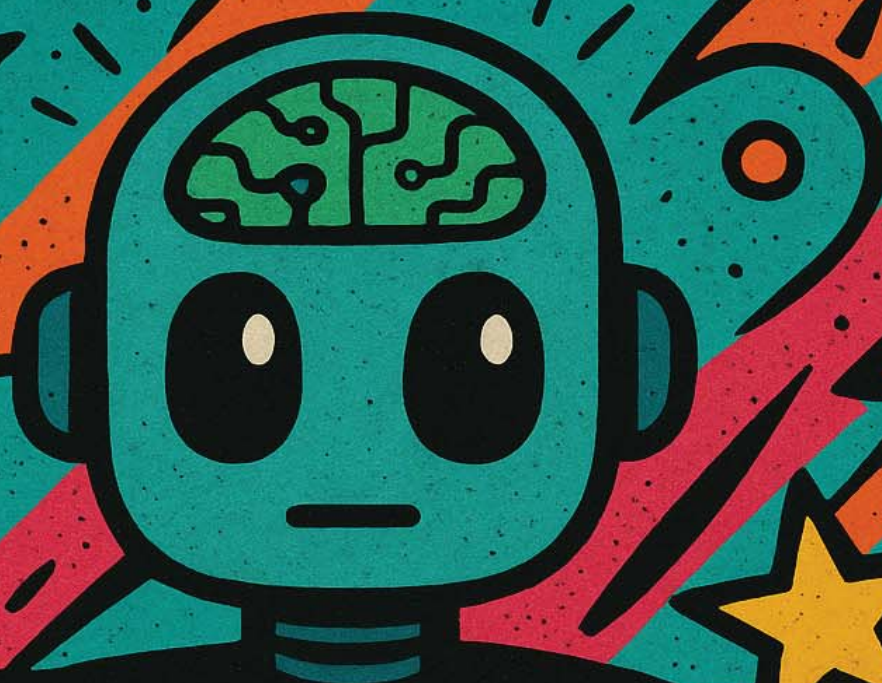
Then, to flex your chest muscles, place your palms on your hips and apply strong pressure. Check for any changes, especially on one side, such as puckering or dimpling. Because few women's breasts are entirely symmetrical, the left and right breasts will not match exactly.

3: The breast tissue equally distributes throughout the chest wall when one is in a lying down position. With your right arm behind your head, place a cushion beneath your right shoulder. Wrap the pads of your three middle fingers around your right breast with your left hand, encircling the armpit and breast region.

To feel for any new lumps, thickenings, stiffened knots, or other alterations in the breast, apply gentle, medium, and firm pressure. In order to check for discharge, squeeze the nipple as well. Do the same with your left breast.



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DUDLEY LEONORA: A legend among us

In a world full of rising stars and fleeting trends, some individuals transcend their time and place, leaving a lasting legacy. These are the true legends: Those who shine – not just locally, but globally.

Sint Maarten is fortunate to have one such living legend among us, someone who continues to bring pride to the island, with their talent, dedication, and unwavering passion – Dudley Lauriano Leonora.

Born on December 15, 1991, in Sint Maarten, Dudley Lauriano Leonora is a professional baseball player whose career spans multiple continents and leagues. Known for his versatility, leadership, and history-making achievements, Dudley has blazed a trail for athletes from his home island in both minor league and international baseball.

1: How long have you been playing baseball?

I have been playing baseball as early as six years old.

2: Which teams have you played with?

In my professional career, I have played with several teams:

- Baltimore Orioles organization (USA)
- Corendon Kinheim (NL)
- Door Neptunus (NL)
- Kingdom of the Netherlands National Team (NL)
- Team Europe (EUR)
- Santa Maria Pirates (CUR)
- KJ74 Wildcats (CUR)
- Curacao National Team
- San Marino (ITALY)
- Macerata Angels (ITALY)

3: Why did you choose baseball?

Early in my life, while growing up in Santa Maria, Curaçao, kids in the neighbourhood played either baseball or football, and my friend group played mainly baseball so I was automatically drawn to the game, which turned into a beautiful career, I must say.

4: When did you realize you have a passion for this sport?

Playing baseball in little league and in the neighbourhood, we always had a very competitive environment and as the years went by, I, along with my coaches, started to realize that my talent level and competitive nature were amongst some of the best in the league. It is there that I realized that baseball was my calling. As such, I started to work on my craft a bit more, refining my skills and knowledge for the game.

5: Tell us about the upcoming event "SXM Baseball Week."

SXM Baseball Week is something that I wanted to bring to Sint Maarten for quite some time. Ever since I was invited to be a part of Baseball Week in Curacao, I wanted to replicate the same thing for the community of Sint Maarten – the place where I was born, spent several years of my life, and the place I represent.

It's a weeklong camp where local kids (boys and girls) who love baseball/softball would have the opportunity to receive professional instruction from top professional players and coaches. It is not only an opportunity to develop the kids' skills, but for them to get a chance to meet and interact with some of the world's best. One cannot imagine the lifelong im-



pact this could have on the kids of the community, and it brings nothing but joy to be able to facilitate that.

The event kicked off on Wednesday, October 8, and ended on Friday, October 10. On Wednesday, at 7:00pm, we had a short opening ceremony where we introduced the international players and coaches, as well

as honoured some of our local heroes who have given back to the sport throughout the years. This is an event we hope to host annually, to help bring the sport of baseball back on top of public interest for our kids.

6: What was the age range of the kids?

The kids ranged in age from 6 to 16 years old.

7: What advice would you give the youth of SXM?

Follow your dreams; work hard and aim to be the best version of yourself in anything you do!

8: What advice do you have for the Sports Minister?

Taking part in sports is more than just a pastime – it is a powerful avenue for our youth to express themselves, develop discipline, and build self-determination. Through sports, they learn teamwork, leadership, and the values that shape them into positive, contributing members of our community.

Sports also open doors to both academic and professional opportunities that can take our young people across the world and beyond. Let us therefore support our youth in every possible way through sports and ensure that we leave them better equipped, more inspired, and in a stronger position than we found them.



The fashion behind the Louvre Heist

BY ADITI RAJPAL

Most people thought about the crime and the robbers' ways when they heard about the Louvre heist. What they stole was the part that caught my attention the most. They did not just steal old jewellery – this was jewellery that was left for a very long time.

The Louvre is well-known for its paintings, like the Mona Lisa. It also has collections of rare clothing, jewellery, and gems that show how fashion evolved over time. These items are equally viewed by fashion designers and collectors, yet they do not get as much attention as the more well-known works of art.

Old brooches, diamond necklaces, and gemstone rings that once belonged to European royalty were reportedly also some of the items taken. This gave insight on how fashion looked a few decades ago. Some were even made by famous jewellers making it even more valuable. Since each piece was handmade and one-of-a-kind, it is impossible to replicate today, regardless of cost.

Some of the stolen items were old dresses and embroidered gloves. They might look delicate in pictures, but they were made to last if taken care of properly. Back then, before machines did most of the work, people sewed and decorated everything by hand. That took patience and hours. You get a better understanding of how fashion was used to look at a person's identity instead of just their attire if you see their clothes in a museum.

After the heist, I saw a lot of people online talking about the designs. Some posts compared old jewellery to current styles and said designers still borrow ideas from these pieces. It would make sense as we see a unique clasp or pattern being reused to make a whole collection. Losing those originals is huge, because you can't just look at the real thing in person anymore.

I also started thinking about how museums keep the smaller stuff safe. The large paintings are usually the focus of attention, but the small details are easier to forget because no one really pays attention to them. That sucks, because we can learn a lot about how people lived in that period from those tiny bits. A tiny watch, glove, or brooch can reveal a person's wealth, what was in style, etcetera.

The stories that go in with the expensive jewellery and old clothes are just as important. It's like losing a part of history that you can never get back when something handmade is stolen. The idea that students, designers, and fashion fans will no longer be able to study how those items were created is sad to think about.

I really hope the museum finds the missing pieces soon. Even if the money gets replaced, the original work doesn't. When you see things like that up close, you realize how much history is in the details. It's crazy how something so small can hold so much history.





What is Diwali?

BY ARTI BULLAND & ADITI RAMCHANDANI

Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is one of the most important and widely celebrated festivals in India and among Hindus around the world. It symbolizes the victory of light over darkness, good over evil, and knowledge over ignorance. People celebrate it by lighting small oil lamps called diyas, decorating their homes, wearing new clothes, sharing sweets, and setting off fireworks.

Meaning and significance

It celebrates the victory of light over darkness and good over evil. It reminds people that no matter how hard life gets, goodness and truth will always win in the end.

In Hindu tradition, it marks Lord Rama's return to Ayodhya after defeating the demon king Ravana.

For others, it also honours Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and prosperity. Many people believe she visits clean, bright homes and blesses families with good fortune for the year ahead. That's why people clean their homes, decorate with lights and say prayers to welcome her.

How it's celebrated

People clean and decorate their homes with lights and colourful rangoli (patterns made from coloured powders).

Families pray together, especially to goddess Lakshmi.

Everyone enjoys festive food, sweets, and fireworks.

It's also a time to forgive, start fresh, and spread happiness.

On Diwali night, families light diyas and candles to fill their homes with light. They offer prayers to goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha for happiness, peace and success. After the prayers, everyone enjoys delicious food, sweets and fireworks. Diwali is also a time for families and friends to come together.

Why do Hindus celebrate Diwali?

Hindus celebrate Diwali for many reasons, but the main one is to mark the victory of light over darkness and good over evil.

Hindus celebrate Diwali because it reminds us of when Lord Rama returned home to Ayodhya after defeating the demon king Ravana. People lit lamps to welcome him back, which is why we light diyas today and that tradition has continued.

It's also a time to honour goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, prosperity, and good fortune.

For many, Diwali also marks a new beginning, so people clean their homes, wear new clothes, and pray for peace and success in the year ahead.

Traditions during Diwali

1: Lighting diyas and candles
People light small clay lamps (diyas) and candles around their homes to represent light winning over darkness.

2: Cleaning and decorating homes
Families clean their houses and decorate them with lights, flowers, and colourful rangoli designs (patterns made with coloured powder or rice).

3: Praying to goddess Lakshmi
Many people do a Lakshmi Puja (a prayer ceremony) to ask for blessings of wealth, happiness, and prosperity.

4: Wearing new clothes
Everyone wears new or nice clothes to start fresh and celebrate with positivity.

5: Sharing sweets and food
Families make and share delicious sweets and snacks with friends, neighbours, and relatives.

6: Fireworks and celebrations
People celebrate with fireworks and sparklers to spread joy and light up the night sky.

7: Visiting family and friends
It's a time to meet loved ones, exchange gifts, and celebrate together.

8: Making rangoli
Families decorate their floors with colourful rangoli designs using coloured powder, rice, or flowers to make their homes look beautiful.

The five days of Diwali

Many people don't realize that Diwali isn't just one day, it is a five-day festival, and each day has a special name and meaning.

Day 1 - Dhanteras: People buy gold, silver or new utensils because it is believed to bring good luck and prosperity. Homes are cleaned and decorated to welcome goddess Lakshmi.

Day 2 - Naraka Chaturdashi/Choti Diwali: This day celebrates Lord Krishna's victory over the demon Narakasura, symbolizing the destruction of evil and negativity.

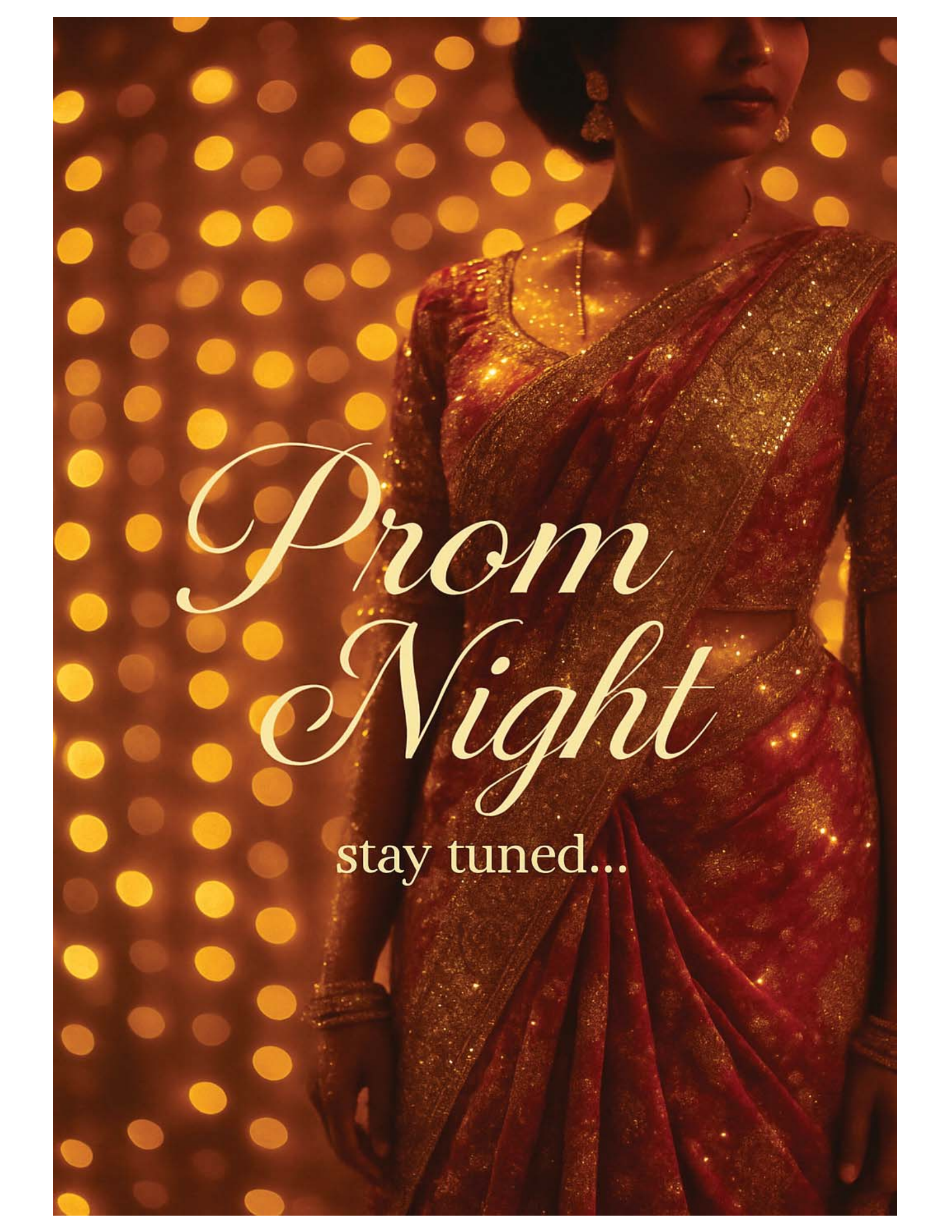
Day 3 - Diwali (main day): Families worship goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha, light diyas, and celebrate with fireworks, sweets and family gatherings.

Day 4 - Govardhan Puja: This day honours Lord Krishna for lifting the Govardhan hill to protect villagers from rain and floods.

Day 5 - Bhai Dooj: This final day celebrates the bond between brothers and sisters, similar to Raksha Bandhan. Sisters pray for their brothers' long life and wellbeing.

Diwali is not just about rituals, it is also a time for self-reflection. It reminds people to let go of negativity, forgive others and make a fresh start. Lighting diyas can be seen as lighting the inner self, bringing clarity, wisdom and peace.



A woman is shown from the chest down, wearing a traditional Indian sari. The sari has a deep red base color with a wide, shimmering gold border and a gold body. She is also wearing a gold necklace and earrings. The background is a warm, golden bokeh of out-of-focus lights.

Prom Night

stay tuned...