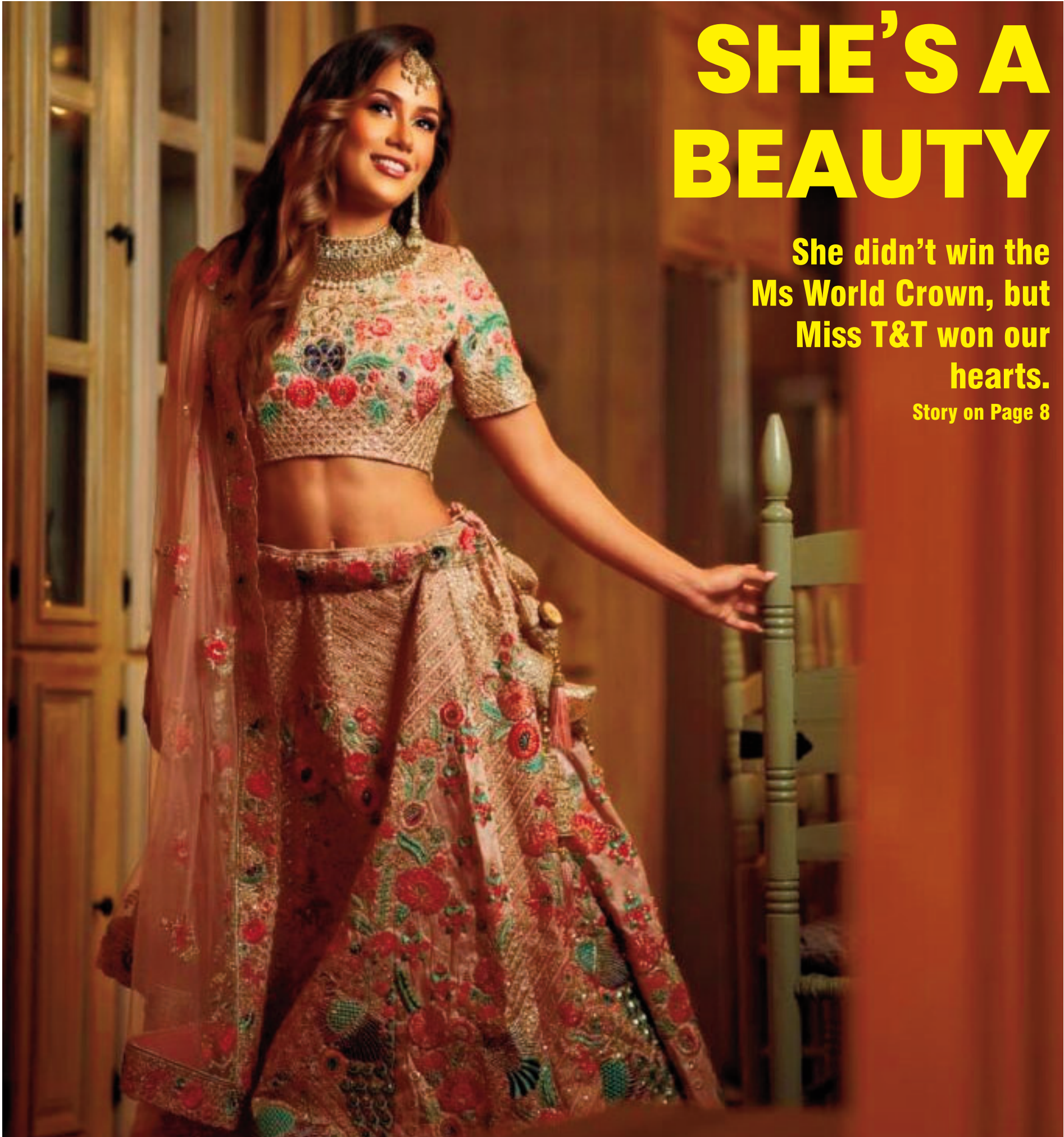




GOOD VIBES ONLY
Sean Paul teams up
with Wiz Khalifa for
summer tour



SHE'S A BEAUTY

**She didn't win the
Ms World Crown, but
Miss T&T won our
hearts.**

Story on Page 8



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Baby Number 3

Rihanna confirms she's expecting third child with A\$AP Rocky

Barbadian music icon Rihanna and her partner A\$AP Rocky are expecting baby number three, the couple confirmed in style at the 2025 Met Gala in New York City in early May.

The “Diamonds” singer, 37, made the reveal as she arrived with her signature flair, proudly showcasing her baby bump in a custom ensemble that had all eyes on her. Before the couple even hit the red carpet, Rihanna’s go-to photographer Miles Diggs broke the news with a striking image of the star standing in the rain — bump on full display — posted to Instagram.

A\$AP Rocky, 36, who served as a co-chair of this year’s gala, beamed on the carpet, telling reporters, including the Associated Press, “It feels amazing” to be expecting again. “It’s time that we show the people what we was cooking up,” he added. “And I’m glad everybody’s happy for us ’cause we definitely happy, you know.”

The pair are already parents to two sons: Riot Rose, who is 21 months old, and RZA Athelston, who turns three this month. Rihanna, affectionately known to fans as “Bad Gal Riri,” previously said she’s open to “as many [kids] as God wants me to have.”

True to form, the Bajan mogul revealed this pregnancy just as dramatically as she did her second — during her 2023 Super Bowl Halftime Show. That performance made history as the first time a pregnant woman headlined the iconic event.

The global superstar first announced she was expecting her first child with Rocky in January 2022, with a paparazzi-style photoshoot in Harlem that sparked a media frenzy.

A\$AP Rocky also has Bajan roots. His father was born in Barbados, and Rocky has spoken in past interviews about visiting the island and being proud of his heritage.



Rihanna at the Met Gala showing off her baby bump

As Rihanna’s family continues to grow, fans in Barbados and around the world are once again celebrating the good news — and waiting to see what dazzling moment she’ll use to share her next big life milestone.

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TIME TO SHIFT

Your Attitude

There is something powerful about the way you choose to show up each day. The way you decide to think, to feel, to engage with the world around you. Have you ever stopped to consider how much control you truly have? How much influence you hold over your own experiences? So often, people believe that circumstances dictate attitude, that external situations determine internal responses. But what if it is the other way around? What if your attitude shapes everything?

You have probably seen it before. Two people go through the same challenge, yet one becomes defeated while the other rises. One sees failure, the other sees a lesson. One gives up, the other grows stronger. What is the difference? It is not luck. It is not an easy life or a privileged background. It is attitude. The choice of how to perceive, how to respond, how to move forward.

Think about your own life. Think about the times you felt like something was impossible, like you had no options, no control. Now look back. Were those moments really as limiting as they seemed? Or was there a shift that could have changed everything? A different way to look at the situation, a different belief, a different response. Maybe, at the time, it felt like there was no choice. But in reality, there always was. And there still is.

So, what kind of energy have you been carrying? What kind of attitude have you been allowing to shape your reality? It is easy to fall into patterns without realizing it. To let frustration, doubt, or hesitation creep in and dictate the way you think. To assume that things are happening to you rather than happening through you. But here is the truth—you hold more power than you realize. And it begins with a decision.

What if, right now, you decided that your attitude would no longer be dictated by circumstances? What if you refused to let external situations determine how you feel inside? What if you chose, instead, to meet everything with strength, with clarity, with an unshakable belief that you are always in control of your response? That is what makes the difference. Not perfection, not ease, but choice. The willingness to step into each moment with intention.

I want you to pause for a moment. Close your eyes if you need to. Breathe in deeply. Feel yourself here, in this moment. Think about something that has been weighing on you. A challenge, a frustration, a doubt. Now, imagine looking at it differently. Imagine choosing a new attitude, one that serves you. Imagine shifting your energy, shifting your focus. What changes? How do you feel? What new possibilities emerge?

That is the power you hold.

Your mind will try to convince you that things need to change first. That you need better circumstances, clearer answers, fewer struggles. But that is an illusion. The most powerful shift happens not when everything falls into place, but when you decide to change how you see what is in front of you.

You have seen this before, have you not? The way one simple shift in perspective can transform an entire experience. The way a challenge can suddenly become an opportunity. The way frustration can dissolve into clarity. It is not magic, and it is not something reserved for certain people. It is a choice. And it is one you can make right now.

So, what if today, you made that choice? What if today, you decided to meet everything with an attitude of possibility? To approach challenges as stepping stones instead of barriers? To hold yourself in a space of confidence rather than hesitation? What would that look like? How would it feel? How much would shift around you simply because you shifted within?

You do not have to wait to become the person who does this. You already are that person. The strength, the wisdom, the clarity—it is already within you. It is just waiting for you to tap into it. Waiting for you to trust it. Waiting for you to decide that you will no longer be at the mercy of circumstances. That you will be the one who decides how you show up, no matter what.

Do you know what happens when you make that shift? Life begins to respond differently. You notice opportunities you had overlooked before. You attract experiences that align with your new energy. You feel a sense of empow-



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erment that was always there but had been buried beneath doubt. It is not because the world suddenly changes. It is because you do. And when you change, everything around you begins to shift as well.

So, take another deep breath. Feel that truth settling into you. Feel that energy rising within you. You are in control of your attitude. You are in control of your response. You are in control of how you shape your own experience.

What will you choose today?

Not tomorrow, not next week, but today. Right now. What is one way you can shift your attitude in this moment? One thought, one belief, one perspective that serves you rather than holds you back. Take a moment. Think about it. Let it settle in.

Now, carry that forward. Hold onto it. Bring it into the next hour, the next challenge, the next conversation. Watch what happens when you do. Watch how your energy shifts, how people respond differently, how solutions begin to emerge. It is not coincidence. It is alignment. It is the natural result of choosing a new way of seeing, a new way of being.

This is your power. Use it wisely. Choose it daily. And watch as everything begins to unfold in ways you never expected.

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A BET-ter Buju

Banton makes history as first reggae headliner for BET Experience 2025

Grammy award-winning reggae icon Buju Banton is once again cementing his legendary status—this time on one of Black entertainment’s biggest stages.

BET Media Group has officially announced the Jamaican superstar as the headlining act for the opening night of the BET Experience 2025, making him the first reggae artist to lead the festival’s kickoff concert in history.

Set for Thursday, June 5 at the Peacock Theater in Los Angeles, Buju’s performance will launch a jam-packed weekend of culture, music, and empowerment ahead of the BET Awards on June 9. Tickets for his much-anticipated concert are already available at [BETExperience.com](https://www.betexperience.com), where fans can also explore other hallmark events like the Roots Picnic Experience and BET R&B Night.

Since his return to the global stage in 2019 after nearly a decade of incarceration, Buju Banton has wasted no time reclaiming his place at the forefront of reggae music. His comeback concert, the “Long Walk to Freedom” show in Kingston, drew over 30,000 fans and featured appearances by some of the Caribbean’s biggest stars. He followed that success with the 2020 album *Upside Down 2020*, earning him another Grammy nomination and collaborations with international heavyweights like John Legend, Pharrell Williams, and DJ Khaled. Before his BET Experience performance, he’ll also headline Best of the Best in South Florida this May.

The BET Experience 2025 lineup, which also includes hip hop royalty The Roots and Lil Kim, is already generating serious buzz, but it’s Buju’s name that’s making headlines. His presence not only marks a major moment for reggae but also serves as a proud representation of Caribbean culture on a global platform.

The festival will run from June 5–8 across multiple venues in Los Angeles. Alongside the concerts, this year’s events include the fan-favorite BETX FanFest at the LA Convention Center and the WayMaker Men’s Summit, a powerful two-day event focused on leadership and empowerment for men of color.

For Buju Banton—born Mark Myrie—this historic booking is a moment of recognition, redemption, and reaffirmation of his enduring impact. From *Til Shiloh* to *Upside Down 2020*, his discography spans decades and genres, resonating deeply with fans across the diaspora.

As the reggae legend prepares to take the stage in L.A., Buju Banton isn’t just making history, he’s making a statement.



Buju Banton

A TUFF PAUSE

Legendary Marley studio shutter its doors as it prepares for an upgrade

Tuff Gong International, the legendary recording studio founded by Bob Marley and an enduring symbol of Jamaican music, is hitting pause—but only to cue up something even more powerful.

In a statement released by the Bob Marley Group of Companies, fans and visitors were informed that the popular Tuff Gong studio tours will be temporarily suspended, but the release was quick to clarify: this is not a farewell. It's a fresh beginning.

“There is a pause on tours at Tuff Gong International, but only because something BIG is on the way!” the statement reads. The announcement went on to promise “a ton of modern enhancements” that will make the revitalized Tuff Gong “the hottest new tour attraction in Kingston.”

The upgrades will include state-of-the-art sound systems, sleek new design elements, and immersive experiences that aim to transport visitors deep into the heart and soul of reggae culture. While no official reopening date has been shared, the energy around the relaunch suggests something transformative is on the horizon.

Located at 220 Marcus Garvey Drive in Kingston, the historic studio has served as the creative playground for several music icons, both local and international. From Jamaican stalwarts like Rita Marley, Beenie Man, Capleton, Sly and Robbie, Lady Saw, Bounty Killer, Popcaan, Vybz Kartel, and I-Wayne, to global stars like Lauryn Hill, Kenny Chesney, Sinead O'Connor, Snoop Dogg, and even U2, Tuff



The Tuff Gong studios in Kingston, Jamaica

Gong has long been a sacred space for musical innovation and cultural exchange.

The upgrades aim to preserve this legacy while catapulting the facility into a new era, blending technology with tradition to create an unforgettable experience for artists and fans alike.

As the Marley family and the Bob Marley

Group of Companies work behind the scenes, they've extended gratitude to their global community. “We thank our patrons for their continued support and partnership,” the release concluded.

With reggae fans from around the world watching closely, the next chapter for Tuff Gong is already humming with promise.

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Guyana takes offence at lyrics in song

BAN VYBZ KARTEL!

Guyana's Ethnic Relations Commission (ERC) is calling for an immediate ban on the song "Good Like Jesus" by Jamaican dancehall artist Vybz Kartel, citing its lyrics as "blasphemous and deeply offensive" to the Christian community and other religious groups in the country.

The lyrics of "Good Like Jesus" contain graphic sexual references and use religious imagery in a provocative context.

In a strongly worded statement issued Wednesday, the ERC condemned the track for what it described as a "profoundly disrespectful" portrayal of Jesus Christ, a figure revered not only by Christians, but also by Muslims and Hindus.

According to the Commission, the song threatens to disrupt the delicate balance of interfaith harmony that underpins Guyana's multicultural society.

While acknowledging that freedom of artistic expression is a protected right, the ERC stressed that such freedom "is not absolute and must be exercised in a most responsible manner with due regard for the religious and cultural values of all communities."

The Commission is formally calling for the song to be banned from Guyana's airwaves, removed from all digital platforms accessible in the country, and prohibited from any form of public dissemination. It is also engaging the promoter of an upcoming Vybz Kartel concert to ensure that the song is not performed or otherwise promoted during the May 24 event.

The call for a ban comes just months after Vybz Kartel visited Guyana, where he launched his Str8 Vybz Rum brand and met with President Irfaan Ali.



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Our Ms World

Ms T&T didn't win the Crown, but she won the people's hearts

MISS Trinidad and Tobago Anna-Lise Nanton topped various categories of competition heading into the Miss World finals on May 31.

The scoreboard issued by the Miss World Organisation has ranked TT in first place with 205 points, ahead of her five closest rivals who are all in joint second place with 190 points each – Estonia, Indonesia, Ireland, Turkiye and Wales.

Miss Zambia was third, Brazil fourth and Miss Martinique – Nanton's roommate, is fifth.

Nanton was selected to head into the quarter-finals due earlier on May 31, with the other Americas and Caribbean quarter finalists so far chosen being Miss Martinique and Miss Puerto Rico. The three other regions (Asia and Oceania, Europe and Africa) have also each chosen three quarter-finalists, with more to come.

Nanton placed first in the Americas and Caribbean region in the Head to Head debate. She placed first in the world in one of the three events comprising the sport/fitness category known as shuttle runs, where she was the only competitor to complete the running challenge in under 60 seconds.

Nanton was fourth overall in sport/fitness, which was won by Estonia, with Martinique second and Canada third.

She was also deemed to be a "talent finalist" for her display of aerial acrobatics in the talent category.

Navin Boodhai of the Miss World TT organisation said that Nanton qualified for the quarter-finals which is expected to have 40 delegates out of the initial 108 entrants.

"On Saturday at 6.30 pm is the final. All 108 will parade. They will announce the top 40." He said this number will be successively halved as the evening progresses, to produce the top woman for each region and of course, the Miss World 2025.

Boodhai praised Nanton's performance in the Head to Head competition, responding to questions on women's freedom of movement and on climate change. "She had to respond unprepared to questions on an international level. She responded phenomenally. This was the first time TT has won the Head to Head challenge."

Ms Thailand won the competition.



Anna Lise Nanton — one of the top contenders at the Miss World 2025 competition



Peter Minshall — Guyana-born, Trinidad-raised artist has changed the face of traditional mas worldwide

THE TALL BOY

Documentary on legendary Mas Man Peter Minshall screened at Cannes

CARIBBEAN filmmakers took centre stage at the Cannes Film Festival during the first-ever Caribbean Day at Pavillon Afriques on May 21.

The event featured *The Tall Boy*, a compelling documentary on Trinidadian Carnival icon Peter Minshall, directed by Life Garland and the Curaçao-set drama *Double Play* by director Ernest Dickerson.

A media release said this landmark event spotlighted the dynamic creativity and growing influence of the Caribbean film industry with a full day of screenings, panels, and networking opportunities.

Hosted by Pavillon Afriques, the premier space for African and diaspora cinema at Cannes, Caribbean Day is tailored to connect regional storytellers with international producers, distributors, investors, and media executives. The initiative promises to elevate the visibility of Caribbean talent and content in one of the world's most prestigious cinematic arenas, the release said.

Attendees also engaged with leading Caribbean filmmakers,

producers, and industry thought leaders through panel discussions, followed by a curated networking session and a celebratory after-party headlined by singer John G.

Mark Walton, ambassador for Pavillon Afriques and associate professor at The New School said, "Caribbean Day is a call to industry professionals looking for fresh stories, new talent, and untapped co-production opportunities.

"The Caribbean is open for collaboration and ready to take its place on the global film stage."

The initiative also underscores the powerful role of film and television in tourism marketing.





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The Beet is On

Kim Forrester is on a journey that is rooted in wellness

Thirty-five-year-old Kimberly Forrester of Tunapuna, Trinidad, has carved a niche for herself with beet at the forefront.

The founder of Wellness Kitchen by Kim and now, as the author of the cookbook *Beets by Kim*, she is on a mission to prove that this often-overlooked root vegetable deserves a spot in every kitchen.

Forrester's cookbook features over 100 recipes ranging from hearty soups and vibrant salads to smoothies, desserts and traditional Caribbean staples reimaged with beets. Nearly 40 per cent of the recipes are vegan, and the vast majority are vegetarian, a reflection of both Forrester's clientele and her approach to sustainable, plant-forward eating. "Beetroot is so much more than just boiled slices on the side of your plate," she stated with conviction.

"There are so many ways to cook it, so many ways to make it taste good – whether you want it masked with other flavours or you want it to shine through. And so many people need the nutrition it offers."

Her story is steeped in tradition, sustainability and a deeply personal relationship with food. Raised in a household where her grandmother – also a caterer – grew much of what they ate, Forrester's first culinary lessons came early. As the eldest granddaughter, she became her grandmother's kitchen helper and eventually her sous chef.

"I grew up in the kitchen, knowing how to use a scale and measure food. From a very early age, I could tell you how many people could eat from a pound of potatoes."

Though she began her tertiary studies in medicine in Jamaica, it was a personal health crisis in 2015 that nudged the food enthusiast into



Kim Forrester is the founder of the Wellness Kitchen and an author

a deeper exploration of nutrition and food as healing. Frustrated by impersonal and often impractical meal plans given to patients – including herself – she envisioned a business that would make healthy, personalised eating both accessible and enjoyable.

After returning to Trinidad in 2017, Forrester connected with Empower Nutrition in St Augustine (founded by a team of registered dietitians on a mission to simplify the path to better health), launching Wellness Kitchen by Kim shortly after. Her business model focused on customised meals for patients recovering from illness or surgery, many of whom had unique dietary needs. The kitchen quickly be-

came an essential service, especially during the covid19 pandemic. "I wanted to solve the problem of people getting meal plans, sticking them on the fridge, and never using them. Many people don't know how to prepare what is recommended, or some plans aren't culturally or personally relevant," Forrester said.

Drawing on a lifetime of experience and further professional certifications – she began developing meals with an emphasis on local, seasonal ingredients and minimal waste, something she traces back to her upbringing.

Forrester is committed to sustainability and food sovereignty, and she encourages others to grow their own food where possible.

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Rihanna is featured on the soundtrack of the new Smurfs movie

SHE'S A SMURFETTE

Rihanna's song for Smurfs movie marks first release since 2022

Rihanna fans, rejoice! After a musical drought that has lasted since 2022's "Lift Me Up" for the Black Panther: Wakanda Forever soundtrack, Barbados' most beloved pop artist is officially back with new music.

The nine-time Grammy winner and global fashion and beauty mogul released a brand-new track titled "Friend of Mine" on Friday, featured on the soundtrack for the upcoming Smurfs animated film. The announcement came on Wednesday with the drop of the film's trailer, which gave fans a first listen to the dreamy, Afrobeats-inspired dance tune. Rihanna's silky vocals croon over the beat with the line, "You're looking like a friend of mine."

Not only is Rihanna lending her voice to the soundtrack, but she's also stepping into the world of animation, starring as Smurfette alongside a star-studded cast including John Good-

man, James Corden, Nick Offerman, and Sandra Oh. The film is slated to hit theaters on July 18.

The Smurfs soundtrack will also feature a sizzling lineup of talent, including South African breakout star Tyla, and a previously released anthem titled "Higher Love" by DJ Khaled, Cardi B, and DESI TRILL.

"Friend of Mine" will be Rihanna's first solo release since "Lift Me Up," which earned critical acclaim and an Oscar nomination for Best Original Song. Before that, fans had last heard an album from the singer in 2016, when she released the genre-blending and chart-topping *Anti*—a record that remains one of her most influential to date. *Anti* spent two weeks at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 and spawned hits like "Work" and "Love on the Brain."

In the years since, Rihanna has been far from idle. She's cemented herself as a fashion

and business powerhouse through her multi-billion-dollar empire, Fenty Beauty and Savage X Fenty, both of which have revolutionized inclusivity in their respective industries. She's also made waves in Hollywood, with roles in films such as *Ocean's 8*, *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, *Home*, and *Battleship*.

The new Smurfs trailer dropped just a week after Rihanna stunned on the red carpet at the 2025 Met Gala alongside partner and event co-chair A\$AP Rocky, where she revealed she is expecting their third child. Yet despite the demands of motherhood, the 36-year-old superstar has made it clear that her next album is still in the works.

With "Friend of Mine" about to make its debut, Navy fans can finally breathe a sigh of relief—and maybe even start hoping that R9 is just around the corner.



Canadians will get a chance at seeing Wiz Khalifa (left) and Sean Paul in concert together on July 18 in Toronto

GOOD VIBES ONLY

Toronto a stop on Sean Paul and Wiz Khalifa summer tour

Global dancehall ambassador Sean Paul is showing no signs of slowing down. The Grammy-winning artist, who has been a mainstay on international charts for over two decades, is set to hit the road again—this time alongside hip-hop superstar Wiz Khalifa.

The two are co-headlining the Good Vibes Only Tour, a 15-city North American amphitheater trek kicking off July 6 in Darien Center, New York, and culminating July 27 in Atlanta, Georgia. Special guest DaBaby will also join the lineup, making it one of the summer's hottest tickets.

For fans of high-energy performances, genre-bending collaborations, and authentic Caribbean flavor, this tour is a match made in musical heaven. Sean Paul, with his signature patois flow and infectious melodies, has built a legacy of crossover appeal—blazing trails for dancehall on global stages. With over 14 billion

streams on Spotify, a GRAMMY Award for Dutty Rock, and genre-defining hits with Beyoncé (“Baby Boy”), Dua Lipa (“No Lie”), Sia (“Cheap Thrills”), and J Balvin (“Contra La Pared”), he remains dancehall’s most commercially successful musical export.

2025 is shaping up to be another banner year for the Jamaican superstar. Earlier this year, Sean Paul completed a successful U.S. tour alongside R&B icon Ashanti, thrilling crowds with back-to-back classics and new material. In between performances, he’s also been in the studio—dropping *Nah Follow Dem* earlier this year.

He’s earned countless accolades: an American Music Award, MTV Europe Music Award, MOBO Award, and numerous nominations from the Billboard Music Awards and Brit Awards. He’s performed on some of the world’s biggest stages, from the Grammys to the BET Awards, and has been credited with opening

doors for a wave of Caribbean artists to follow.

But beyond the accolades and streaming numbers, Sean Paul’s unmatched energy, crowd-rocking charisma, and commitment to spreading Caribbean culture globally have kept him at the helm of Caribbean entertainers.

Now, with the Good Vibes Only Tour, Sean Paul is poised to bring that energy to even more fans across North America. Dates include major stops like Toronto’s Budweiser Stage (July 18), St. Louis’s Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre (July 21), and Raleigh’s Coastal Credit Union Music Park (July 26). For fans in the diaspora, it’s the perfect chance to represent, reminisce, and revel in the sounds of home.

Tickets for the Good Vibes Only Tour are already generating buzz.

For Caribbean fans across North America, the tour is sure to deliver exactly what it promises—good vibes only.

VAYA CON DIOS

Mexican Reggae singer Jah Fabio dies at 43

The Latin American and Caribbean reggae community is mourning the loss of Mexican singer Jah Fabio, who passed away on Saturday in Tijuana, Mexico. He was 43 years old.

Born Favio Velasco, the beloved artist had long battled kidney disease and had been undergoing dialysis for the past three years. His death came suddenly, just weeks before he was scheduled to perform at Reggae Sumfest in Jamaica—an event he had long dreamed of gracing.

Jah Fabio had been in Tijuana for a three-day wedding celebration, where he performed on Thursday and Friday. On Saturday morning, he began vomiting at his hotel and was rushed to a clinic by his wife. He was pronounced dead on arrival, with cardiac arrest listed as the cause.

A committed ambassador of reggae music in Latin America, Jah Fabio spent more than two decades promoting Jamaican culture across the Spanish-speaking world. His authentic embrace of reggae earned him admiration far beyond Mexico's borders.

Jamaica's Minister of Culture, Gender, Entertainment and Sport, Olivia Grange, expressed her condolences in a heartfelt social media tribute:

"He loved and embraced reggae music with a passion. He was a committed soldier to the cause. We will miss him at Reggae Sumfest. I know that his close colleagues and the music fraternity in Mexico are [as] deeply saddened as we are at his transition. My brother, rest well in the arms of Jah, who I know gave you the strength to keep going in spite of the challenges you faced."

Jah Fabio had previously performed in Ja-



Jah Fabio — was scheduled to appear at Reggae Sumfest in Jamaica

maica, most notably at Emancipation Park, where Minister Grange saw him live and praised his "stellar performance."

Organizers of Reggae Sumfest also paid tribute, noting that Jah Fabio's "energy, message, and unwavering love for reggae music

touched hearts across the globe."

Favio Velasco's passing marks the end of a passionate career rooted in cross-cultural love and musical devotion. His legacy continues to inspire reggae fans throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.



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The Jamaica Tourist Board team received the award for Best Tourist Board – Caribbean and Best Destination - in Toronto

BEST DESTINATION

Jamaica wins top points at TravelPulse Canada awards

Destination Jamaica has reaffirmed its dominance on the international tourism scene, securing two major awards at the 2024 TravelPulse Canada Readers' Choice Awards. At a gala event held on May 15, Jamaica was named Best Tourist Board – Caribbean and Best Destination – Caribbean, continuing its winning streak in the Canadian market.

This marks the fifth consecutive year that Jamaica has been honoured by TravelPulse Canada readers, a testament to the Jamaica Tourist Board's (JTB) sustained excellence and strong presence in promoting the island to Canadian travellers.

"These accolades reflect the consistent dedication of our tourism team and partners," said Hon. Edmund Bartlett, Minister of Tourism. "Jamaica's brand continues to resonate with Cana-

dian travellers, and this recognition is a testament to our strategic efforts in service excellence, innovation, and relationship building. We thank our Canadian travel advisors for their unwavering support and partnership."

Over the years, Jamaica has earned a slew of honours from TravelPulse Canada, including Tourist Board of the Year – Overall for four straight years (2020–2023), and Best Tourist Board – Caribbean/Mexico annually from 2020 to 2023. In 2023 alone, the island was recognized as both the Best Destination – Caribbean and the Favourite Honeymoon Destination.

Donovan White, Director of Tourism, also welcomed the accolades: "To be acknowledged year after year by TravelPulse Canada is a clear signal that our message is reaching the right people and that our destination continues to ex-

ceed expectations. These awards belong to the entire tourism community—from our team at the JTB to the hoteliers, attractions, and travel advisors who help make Jamaica shine."

Angella Bennett, Regional Director, Canada, at the Jamaica Tourist Board, echoed the sentiment, adding, "We are thrilled to be recognized once again by TravelPulse Canada's valued community of travel advisors. This is a true reflection of the relationships we've built, the trust we've earned, and the passion Canadians have for Jamaica."

The TravelPulse Canada Readers' Choice Awards are voted on by thousands of Canadian travel advisors across more than 30 categories. Jamaica's continued recognition underscores its lasting appeal and leadership in delivering world-class travel experiences.

PHOENIX

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GROUP EXHIBIT

Gallery 1065, Bloor St. West, Toronto
June 6 - 15, Opening Night Reception: June 7, 6pm

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GALLERY
1065



Consulate General of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago
Toronto

Piece by artist Shalini Seereeram

A Literary Warrior

Kenyan legendary author Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o dies at age 87

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, the legendary Kenyan author, scholar, and revolutionary thinker, has passed away at the age of 87. In 2022, he won the African Genius Award alongside Wole Soyinka.

For over six decades, Ngũgĩ chronicled the soul of a nation and a continent in transformation, from the brutal era of British colonial rule to the hard-won, often disillusioning dawn of independence. He was more than a writer; he was a literary warrior who chose resistance over comfort and mother tongue over empire.

Despite being long-rumoured to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, a prize he deserved many times over, Ngũgĩ will be remembered not for the awards he didn't receive, but for the legacy he built. He stood as a fearless advocate for African languages, arguing passionately that true decolonization must begin with the word, with the language of the people.

Born James Thiong'o Ngũgĩ in 1938 in Limuru, Kenya, Ngũgĩ grew up in a family of poor farmers under the iron grip of British colonial rule. His early education at the missionary-run Alliance High School introduced him to English literature, but his reality was shaped by the violent crackdown on the Mau Mau resistance.

That violence was personal. Ngũgĩ's brother, Gitogo, who was deaf, was shot in the back by a British soldier for failing to obey a command he could not hear. His village was razed, and family members detained in camps, acts of colonial terror that would leave a permanent imprint on his writing.

In 1959, Ngũgĩ left Kenya for Makerere University in Uganda. It was there that his destiny began to take shape. At a writers' conference, he shared the manuscript of his first novel, *Weep Not, Child*, with Nigerian literary giant Chinua Achebe. Achebe recognized the brilliance and helped publish the work, marking the arrival of the first major English-language novel by an East African author.

He followed with *The River Between* and *A Grain of Wheat*, cementing his place as a powerful new voice in African storytelling. But it was in 1977 that Ngũgĩ would make a bold and irreversible pivot, rejecting colonial identity and embrac-



Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o — died at age 87

ing full cultural emancipation.

He changed his name to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, discarding his Christian, colonial-given names. More than that, he made the radical decision to stop writing in English altogether. From then on, he would write exclusively in Kikuyu, his mother tongue, a revolutionary act in a literary world still dominated by European languages.

That same year, he co-wrote the play *Ngaahika Ndeenda* (I Will Marry When I Want), a searing critique of class inequality in post-independence Kenya. The government shut it down. Ngũgĩ was imprisoned for a year without trial in a maximum-security prison.

But even behind bars, the pen never stopped. Denied basic writing materials, Ngũgĩ wrote his first Kikuyu novel, *Devil on the Cross*, on prison-issued toilet paper. It was an act of defiance and artistic brilliance.

When Daniel arap Moi came to power, Ngũgĩ was released. But freedom remained elusive. In

1982, while abroad promoting his work, Ngũgĩ learned of a plot to assassinate him if he returned to Kenya. He entered into self-imposed exile, first in the UK, then in the United States — and would not return home for 22 years.

When he finally did, thousands greeted him as a hero. But tragedy struck again, intruders attacked him and raped his wife in a horrifying assault that Ngũgĩ believed was politically motivated. He returned to the U.S., where he continued his academic and literary work at institutions like Yale, New York University, and the University of California, Irvine.

Throughout his career, Ngũgĩ challenged the very foundations of post-colonial African identity. In his seminal essay collection *Decolonising the Mind*, he asked: "What is the difference between a politician who says Africa cannot do without imperialism and the writer who says Africa cannot do without European languages?"



IS THIS LOVE?

YG Marley, Shenseea spotted getting all cosy together in Brooklyn

Shenseea and Lauryn Hill's son, YG Marley, may be the newest couple on the block.

The two artists sparked dating rumors this week after being spotted together looking cozy. The clip was shared on Shenseea's Instagram Story showing her smoking hookah in YG Marley's arms as Bob Marley's "Is This Love" plays in the background.

YG Marley is the son of Ms. Lauryn Hill and Rohan Marley, Bob Marley's son, which makes him a third-generation artist in the Marley lineage. Last year, he scored a massive hit "Praise Jah in the Moonlight" which samples his grandfather's classic single "Crisis," released in 1978 on his Kaya project.

Neither Shenseea nor YG Marley have confirmed their relationship and this could be just

an innocent interaction among two Jamaican celebrities. The clip was captured by ShenYeng in Brooklyn at a popular local spot. However, their linkup was enough to send dancehall fans into a frenzy, with some people asking about her ex-boyfriend London On Da Track.

"Wasn't she just with London on da track the other day or was it Rvssian idk but seems she is trying to make one of them jealous," one fan wrote.

Shenseea previously ignited dating rumors with London On Da Track between 2022 and 2023, following his split from Summer Walker. They were first spotted out publicly when they held hands while attending the Super Bowl LVI in Los Angeles in 2022. At the time Shenseea denied that they were an item, but London On Da

Track's baby mother later spilled the beans forcing them to come clean about their relationship.

London also worked on Shenseea's debut album *Alpha* and was signed to the same label as her, Interscope Records. The producer famously attended her album release party in Jamaica where he gifted her a custom diamond encrusted chain.

In the meantime, Shenseea is fresh out of her record deal as she recently shared that she is back to being an independent artist after exiting Interscope. The Jamaican artist shared that she will be dropping new music soon, as she gets back to her dancehall roots. ShenYeng also recently performed with Vybz Kartel at night two of his sold-out show at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn earlier this month.



Loyalty Pays

Drake gifts Vybz Kartel \$200K chain, duo have a collaboration in the works

Drake gifted Vybz Kartel a custom OVO chain before his historic show at the Barclays Center, and now we know how much money he dropped on it.

Vybz Kartel is one of the artists who showed a lot of support to Drake at the height of his beef with Kendrick Lamar, and now the Canadian rapper is rewarding him for his loyalty.

Drizzy is a huge fan of Vybz Kartel's music, so when Kartel showed him love following his release from prison last year, it was from a genuine place of admiration. The dancehall legend and the Toronto rapper have a collaboration in the

works, but The Boy isn't waiting for that song to drop to honor one of his music friends.

Leading up the Kartel's sold-out back-to-back shows at the Barclays Center in Brooklyn in April, Drake surprised him with an iced-out OVO Owl chain from famed New York Jeweler Alex Moss. Sources told Urban Islandz that the "God's Plan" rapper spent US\$250,000 on the chain, equivalent to around J\$32 million.

Kartel shouted out Drake after the shows thanking him for the chain while also showcasing another custom chain gifted to him by his long-time friend and collaborator, producer Rvssian.

"Drake send this him say congrats Kartel you sell out Barclays twice back to back like am on the cover of Lethal Weapon, back to back like am Jordan in 96-97," Kartel shared while reciting Drake's diss track "Back To Back" lyrics.

Vybz Kartel is getting ready for more arena shows as he embarks on a US tour with upcoming shows in Miami and Atlanta. The dancehall legend is now living in South Florida as he looks to push his career on the international scene. He recently linked up with DJ Khaled and Bounty Killer, where he recorded new music for Khaled's forthcoming album, Aalam Of God.

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SALTWATER ENERGY

Sierra Leone's Abioseh Dundas creates device that can provide electricity out of sea water

Sierra Leonean innovator Oswald Abioseh Dundas has developed an energy system that generates electricity using saltwater. His innovation can provide up to 600 hours of uninterrupted electricity.

Oswald, 34, is no stranger to the innovation space in Sierra Leone. As the founder of Oswald Tech Company, he has developed numerous innovations over the years.

In 2012, he built Sierra Leone's first locally made robot, named Dot.Nasa, using scrap materials. He drew inspiration for the robot from the movie Pacific Rim.

In April 2025, Oswald advanced to the semifinals of the West African Startup World Cup, which was held in Freetown, Sierra Leone. He stood out among 30 Sierra Leonean startups for his sustainable energy solution, which generates electricity using seawater or a mixture of salt and water.

The West African Startup World Cup was hosted by Sierra Leone's Ministry of Communication, Technology and Innovation, in partnership with the FeliCity Project. It was the first-ever Startup World Cup semifinals held in Sierra Leone.

As a result of his outstanding performance, Oswald will represent Sierra Leone at the Startup World Cup Finale in California on October 17, 2025. There, he will compete with other startup founders from around the world for a chance to win a \$1 million investment, along with access to world-class mentors and funding opportunities.

Oswald's innovative spirit runs in the family. His grandfather, Alphas Dundas, developed Sierra Leone's first eco-friendly stove, known as the Alphas Stove, back in 1985.

The Startup World Cup is a global platform that connects startups with investors. Regional winners like Oswald advance to the finals in San Francisco, where they pitch for life-changing investment opportunities and global exposure.



Oswald Abioseh Dundas — innovator



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