

The logo for the Trinidad and Tobago Internet Governance Forum (TTIGF). It features the letters 'TTIGF' in a bold, sans-serif font. The 'TT' is red, while the 'IGF' is black. The background of the entire page is an illustration of a modern city skyline with various skyscrapers, palm trees, and a body of water. In the foreground, there are several stylized figures: a man in a white lab coat and glasses, a woman in a white lab coat, and two men in orange safety vests and hard hats. They are interacting with various digital screens and data visualizations, suggesting a focus on technology and innovation.

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM

# The Innovation Paradox – Balancing Progress with Responsibility and Resilience

January 29<sup>th</sup> & 30<sup>th</sup>, 2026

## MEETING REPORT

## INTRODUCTION

### About the Trinidad and Tobago Internet Governance Forum (TTIGF)

The 10<sup>th</sup> annual TTIGF was held as a hybrid event over two (2) days on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> and Friday 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2026. The theme entitled for 2026 was *The Innovation Paradox - Balancing Progress with Responsibility and Resilience*.

The target audience for the event included:

- Academic Community
- Technical Community/ ICT Civil Society
- Civil Society
- Commercial / Business
- Government
- Students
- All Internet Users.

The IGF is valued as a resource for networking with peers, a forum for sharing information and experiences and “a non-judgmental venue” for members to openly discuss their challenges and perspectives.

The TTIGF is hosted annually by the **Trinidad and Tobago Multistakeholder Advisory Group (TTMAG)**. TTMAG is an independent entity for the promotion and development of best practice policy standards for the .tt country code Top Level Domain (ccTLD) and the local Internet ecosystem in the interest of the Internet Community. The entity aims to continue the mandate of the United Nations Secretary-General, to:

1. maximize the opportunity for open, inclusive dialogue and the exchange of ideas on Internet governance (IG) related issues;
2. create opportunities to share best practices and experiences;
3. identify emerging issues and bring them to the attention of the relevant bodies and the general public;
4. contribute to capacity building for Internet governance; and
5. facilitate inclusive, productive discussions on Internet-related public policy issues from a general perspective, while keeping all stakeholders involved.

**AGENDA**

<b>DAY ONE- JANUARY 29<sup>TH</sup></b>	
<b>9:00 - 9:05 am</b>	<p><b>Welcome Remarks:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Dev Gosine, Chair, <i>Trinidad and Tobago Multistakeholder Advisory Group (TTMAG)</i></li> </ul>
<b>9:05 - 9:25 am</b>	<p><b>Keynote Addresses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Mr. Chengetai Masango, Head of Office at the <i>UN IGF Secretariat</i></li> <li>● Ms. Paula Otegy, Head, Multistakeholder Engagement, <i>Latin American and Caribbean Internet Addresses Registry (LACNIC)</i></li> </ul>
<b>9.25 - 10:50 am</b>	<p><b>Panel Session: Securing Critical Infrastructure</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moderator: Prof. Sanjay Bahadoorsingh, Director, <i>TTMAG</i></li> <li>● Mr. Michael A. Ramesar, Senior Engineer and Consultant</li> <li>● Mr. Camilo Cuartas, Senior Manager, Security Operations Center, <i>Liberty Latin America</i></li> <li>● Dr. Marlon Atherton, CEO, <i>ATEAM Solution Services</i></li> <li>● Mr. Dale Joseph, Chief Analyst Cyber, <i>Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC), CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)</i></li> </ul>
<b>10:50 - 12:15 pm</b>	<p><b>Panel Session: Integrating AI into Digital Transformation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moderator: Mr. George Gobin, Director, <i>TTMAG</i></li> <li>● Mr. Kirk Henry, Group Chief Information Officer, <i>ANSA McAL Group of Companies</i></li> <li>● Ms. Ebony De Leon, Chief Executive Officer, <i>DataAura Analytics</i></li> <li>● Mr. Christopher Reckord, Author and Digital Transformation Strategist</li> </ul>
<b>12:15 - 1:30pm</b>	<p><b>Panel Session: Digital Divide</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Moderator: Mr. Ajmal Nazir, Director, <i>TTMAG</i></li> <li>● Mr. Kurleigh Prescod, CEO, <i>Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago</i></li> <li>● Mr. Rushton Paray, Managing Director and Founder of <i>Computer Technologies &amp; Services Limited (CTSL)</i></li> <li>● Mr. Scofield Thomas, Managing Director, <i>800 TECH</i></li> <li>● Mr. Keenan Singh, CEO, <i>Air Link Communications</i></li> </ul>

<b>1:30 -2:15 pm</b>	<b>Open Forum</b>
<b>DAY TWO - JANUARY 30<sup>TH</sup></b>	
<b>9:00 - 9:10 am</b>	<b>Welcome and Keynote Address</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dev Gosine, Chair, <i>Trinidad and Tobago Multistakeholder Advisory Group (TTMAG)</i></li> <li>• The Honourable Dr. Michael Dowlath, Minister of Education, <i>Ministry of Education</i></li> </ul>
<b>9:10- 12:00 pm</b>	<b>Youth Forum</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Led by Restore a Sense of I Can (RSC) in collaboration with the TTMAG</li> </ul>
<b>1:30-3:00pm</b>	<b>Panel Session: The Human Cost of Innovation - Mental Health and Well-being in the Digital Age</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderator: Ms. Jacqueline Morris, Director, <i>TTMAG</i></li> <li>• Mr. Glenn McKnight, Chief Information Officer, <i>Virtual School of Internet Governance</i></li> <li>• Mr. Brandon Subero, Clinical Psychologist, <i>Elder Associates Limited</i></li> <li>• Dr. Miranda Foon, Psychiatrist</li> </ul>
<b>3:00 -4:30 pm</b>	<b>Panel Session: AI, Cyber Resilience and Regional Innovation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moderator: Mr. Ajmal Nazir, Director, <i>TTMAG</i></li> <li>• Mr. Anish Bachu, Manager, <i>TTCSIRT</i></li> <li>• Ms. Esther Callender-George, President, <i>Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) Trinidad and Tobago Chapter</i></li> <li>• Mr. Anthony Peyson, President, <i>ISC2 Caribbean Chapter</i></li> </ul>
<b>4:30 - 5:00 pm</b>	<b>Presentation by the Caribbean Telecommunications Union: Caribbean AI Task Force Report</b>
<b>5:00 -5:10 pm</b>	<b>Vote of thanks and Closing</b>

**DAY ONE - JANUARY 29**

**WELCOME AND KEYNOTE ADDRESSES**

**Dev Gosine, Chair, TTAMAG**

The Chair welcomed all to the TTIGF 2026 and underscored the Forum’s role as a catalyst for digital policy dialogue, framed around the theme of the “innovation paradox” – the need to balance rapid technological advancement with responsibility, resilience, and ethical governance. He highlighted the accelerating pace of artificial intelligence and digital economy development, noting that while these advancements present significant opportunities, they also introduce increasing complexity, systemic vulnerabilities, and new risks. Particular emphasis was placed on protecting vulnerable populations and ensuring the resilience of critical infrastructure, including power grids, water systems, and healthcare facilities.

Mr. Gosine outlined the core thematic areas guiding the Forum’s discussions and further emphasized the importance of small island developing states demonstrating leadership in global digital governance and called upon government, private sector, academia, and civil society stakeholders to work collaboratively to advance responsible and inclusive innovation.

**Mr. Chengetai Masango, Head of Office at the UN IGF Secretariat**

Mr. Masango outlined the IGF’s mission of sustainability, security, stability, and development of the internet through inclusive dialogue. He stated that Trinidad and Tobago IGF is recognized as a best practice model for multistakeholder national and regional engagement.

Mr. Masango stated that the UN General Assembly’s confirmation of the IGF as a permanent UN forum reinforces the importance of open, cooperative internet governance. He emphasized the need for regional dialogue, capacity building, and inclusion and encouraged nominations for the multistakeholder advisory group to ensure Latin American and Caribbean representation.

**Ms. Paula Oteguay, Head, Multistakeholder Engagement, LACNIC**

Ms. Oteguay indicated that LACNIC supports the TTIGF as a consistent and inspiring multistakeholder initiative in Latin America and the Caribbean as over the last 10 years, the forum cultivated diverse voices, meaningful dialogue, and regional digital cooperation. LACNIC’s regional support program has funded over 15 initiatives last year, emphasizing the importance of local realities in global internet governance. She reinforced the role of regional collaboration in building a stable, secure, and open internet for Caribbean digital futures.

## **PANEL SESSION**

### **AI IN CYBER WARFARE: SECURING CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN REGULATED ENVIRONMENTS**

**Moderator:** Prof. Sanjay Bahadoorsingh, Director, *TTMAG*

**Panellists:**

- Mr. Michael A. Ramesar, Senior Engineer and Consultant
- Mr. Camilo Cuartas, Senior Manager, Security Operations Center, *Liberty Latin America*
- Dr. Marlon Atherton, CEO, *ATEAM Solution Services*
- Mr. Dale Joseph, Chief Analyst Cyber, *Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre (RIFC)*, *CARICOM Implementation Agency for Crime and Security (IMPACS)*

### **Panel Overview**

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping the cyber threat landscape, introducing new capabilities for both defense and attack. From AI-driven malware and automated reconnaissance to deepfake-enabled social engineering, cyber warfare is becoming faster, more adaptive, and more difficult to detect. For countries like Trinidad & Tobago – where critical infrastructure underpins national security, economic stability, and public safety – this shift presents both urgent risks and strategic opportunities. This panel explored how AI-enabled cyber threats impact regulated sectors such as energy, telecommunications, finance, healthcare, transportation, and government digital services. It examined sector-specific vulnerabilities, emerging attack scenarios, and the unique challenges posed by legacy systems, operational technology (OT), and increasing digital interconnectivity. Bringing together policymakers, regulators, industry leaders, and cybersecurity practitioners, the discussion focused on the regulatory, governance, and capability-building measures needed to strengthen national resilience. The session aimed to move beyond theory, highlighting practical strategies for AI-enhanced monitoring, cross-sector coordination, workforce development, and the creation of a coherent national approach to AI and cybersecurity in Trinidad & Tobago.

The key points from the discussions are captured below.

Prof. Bahadoorsingh introduced the panel and emphasized critical infrastructure as the backbone of national security, economy, and public welfare. He highlighted recent ransomware attacks on local entities and global incidents.



### Opening Insights

- AI is both a tool and a target in critical infrastructure systems. It changes the cyber threat model as attacks that took months now take weeks due to AI-accelerated reconnaissance and exploitation.
- There are cascading systemic risk in interconnected critical sectors (energy, petrochemicals, telecom, finance).
- Strategy and fundamentals remain critical in cyber defense.
- There is a need for understanding the business impact of infrastructure failures over mere technology acquisition.
- While AI accelerates cyberattacks but legacy and siloed OT systems pose challenges.
- The key is to turn AI from an amplifier of risks to an enabler of resilience.
- Adoption of AI expands the attack surface and requires governance over AI implementations and their security.
- CARICOM IMPACS updated its cyber security and cybercrime action plan with AI-specific provisions.
- The Plan emphasizes six pillars including capacity development, technical standards, policy harmonization, regional and international cooperation.
- There is a need to modernize infrastructure and pass effective legislation (e.g., cybercrime bill, Budapest Convention).

### Topic: Policy and Regulation

#### Question: What should regulators change or strengthen to remain effective in an AI driven threat landscape?

- The Caribbean region lacks maturity in regulating AI.
- There is a need to assess local capacity and infrastructure before establishing governance.
- Current regulatory frameworks are foundational but insufficient.

- Regulators must legislate dynamically with enforcement and monitoring capabilities and make key shifts:
  - Move from static compliance to dynamic resilience;
  - Explicitly govern AI risk (inventories, model governance, AI red teaming);
  - Regulate systematic dependencies (cloud, identity providers);
  - Enable coordination and real-time information sharing.
- Data collection and feedback are our Achilles' heel.
- Regional harmonization is vital.
- Legislation must underpin cyber resilience.

**Question: Where are we now?**

- The focus should be on business impact analysis and consequence management rather than chasing new tools.
- Regulatory frameworks often address yesterday's risks.
- AI shifts cyber risk to national resilience challenge.
- Legacy OT systems are vulnerable and technology was not designed to withstand targeted AI attacks.
- There is a need for integrity monitoring, detection and containment recovery, workforce investment and outcome-based resilience.
- Work with existing frameworks.
- Dynamic adaptation is critical.
- The Regional Cybersecurity and Cybercrime Action Plan provides guidelines to advance regulation as AI evolves.
- Ethical use of AI in law enforcement is under research at CARICOM IMPACS.

**Question: Within the context of Critical Infrastructure and regulated environments, how realistically can AI improve monitoring Detection and Response?**

- Legacy OT systems are fragile and were not designed for security.
- Patching is unrealistic.
- Segmentation and engineered AI-enabled detection systems are critical.
- Off-the-shelf IT security tools insufficient alone, there is a need for engineered, hybrid systems.
- AI accelerates detection through behavioural analytics.
- AI helps triage and augment human response.
- Human-in-the-loop oversight essential due to safety.
- Air-gapped networks were compromised by pandemic-driven remote access.
- AI adoption needs secure governance.
- Public-private partnerships are vital for capacity and threat response.
- Ethical use of AI for law enforcement is an area of ongoing research.

**Question: Can companies oversubscribe on security measures? Is there a thing as too much precaution?**

- Expertise is critical as you can run the risk in over securing yourself.
- Overprotection is possible, especially without clear understanding of risk and assets.
- Engage trusted consultants or internal experts.
- Conduct risk assessments and business impact analyses.
- Avoid unnecessary or overlapping tools to control costs and complexity.
- Building governance and awareness is foundational before technology acquisition.

**Question: Is AI truly a threat or is it a reflection of human intention? How can education and ethics ensure that we shape it with wisdom rather than fear?**

- AI reflects user inputs and can produce outputs only as good as data and oversight allow.
- Capacity building and awareness are critical to shape AI use wisely rather than with fear.
- AI requires ethical frameworks and public sensitization for responsible adoption.

**Closing Advice within the context of National Cyber Resilience in AI-Driven Threat Landscape**

- Increase simulation exercises on a national level with critical infrastructure.
- Develop industrial cyber security skills with academia, industry, government collaboration.
- Emphasize cross-sector coordination, real-time information sharing, and joint exercises.
- Resilience depends on connected systems, not the strongest individual players.
- Pursue workforce training and skills development. The shortage of AI and cyber professionals must be addressed via education.
- Focus on public awareness, capacity development, technical standards, harmonized policy, and international cooperation; update legislation and empower law enforcement; promote cyber diplomacy.

**Key takeaways:**

- Regulation and policy need to be updated
- There are opportunities for capacity building
- Cooperation and coordination - public private partnerships are key
- The threat model has changed

## PANEL SESSION

### INTEGRATING AI INTO DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

**Moderator:** Mr. George Gobin, Director, *TTMAG*

**Panellists:**

- Mr. Kirk Henry, Group Chief Information Officer, *ANSA McAL Group of Companies*
- Ms. Ebony De Leon, Chief Executive Officer, *DataAura Analytics*
- Mr. Christopher Reckord, Author and Digital Transformation Strategist

### Panel Overview

This panel examined how artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming the driving force behind digital transformation, presenting both unprecedented opportunities and significant governance responsibilities. Framed around relevance, feasibility, and comprehensiveness, the discussion explored AI's role in boosting productivity, improving public and private sector service delivery, and advancing societal outcomes such as healthcare, education, and sustainability. With a focus on Trinidad and Tobago and the wider Caribbean, panellists considered practical pathways for AI adoption, the importance of multi-stakeholder collaboration, and the enabling role of infrastructure, talent, and ethical frameworks. The session also highlighted how AI can be integrated across governance, industry, cities, and the digital economy, while ensuring inclusivity and trust remain central to digital progress.



### **Opening Perspectives on AI and Digital Transformation**

- The world has the opportunity to benefit from the ever increasing pace of digital technology.
- AI is an amplifier of governance – good governance amplified positively, poor governance amplified negatively.
- Decision-making under uncertainty is the key challenge.
- AI should be leveraged for public good and business value.
- AI alone is not digital transformation. Digital transformation requires culture, incentives, workflows, and mind-set shifts.
- Caribbean organizations face challenges in upskilling and embracing experimentation.
- Leadership must foster psychological safety for innovation.
- It is a change management challenge before a technology management challenge.
- There is a need to involve all stakeholders in digital transformation.
- AI is the engine of digital transformation but must solve real problems and business needs should be addressed.

### **Question: What has been the impact of the rise of AI on Digital Transformation and what is the biggest opportunity you see, as well as the biggest misconception?**

- Digital transformation is uneven and cautious as many organizations treat it as technology upgrade rather than business transformation.
- The Caribbean can leapfrog traditional stages of development stages by using cloud platforms and AI if the approach is strategic and deliberate.
- The biggest opportunity is leveraging data effectively.
- The biggest misconception is that AI requires expensive cutting-edge technology. Most value comes from solving the right problem first.
- One challenge is reducing fear around AI job loss.
- AI should be used to augment, not replace, through automating mundane tasks.
- The Caribbean has vast untapped potential through creativity and accessible AI tools.
- Culture change and leadership are needed to encourage experimentation and risk-taking.
- The biggest opportunity is participation in the digital global economy by shifting from consumption to creation.

### **Question: How can Governments or even small and medium enterprises be ready and participate in the integration of AI and Digital Transformation?**

- Larger private companies are more aggressive in AI adoption due to competition and resources but often adopt non-tailored global solutions.

- AI creates transparency which can be uncomfortable as it brings to light things unknown or ignored.
- The challenge is the expectations on the Government from citizens.
- Technology projects have failed in the past as we try to implement new technology on old projects.
- Small and medium businesses represent great opportunity for transformation.

**Question: Skills, workforce and culture - How do we prepare to get our people ready?**

- Harnessing the creativity that exists and promoting the mind-set shift is a challenge.
- Innovation should be promoted by translating research into real world impact.

**Question: If you could implement one AI initiative tomorrow, what would that be and what does success look like for AI enabled transformation?**

- Citizens do not understand the services that the Government provides for them so the creation of a national chatbot based on WhatsApp would be impactful. Local dialect and language would be key components. This is currently being developed in Jamaica.
- Strong coordination matters as well as defining data requirements. There is no value in outdated data.

**Question: What advice would you give to companies in managing AI skills around staff and dependence over time?**

- Proactively educate employees on the technology and how it can be used to augment work within the organisation.

**Takeaways:**

- Focus on data, decisions and outcomes.
- There needs to be a culture change: from risk aversion to experimentation.
- AI is a present opportunity not a future technology.

**PANEL SESSION**  
**THE DIGITAL DIVIDE**

**Moderator:** Mr. Ajmal Nazir, Director, TTMAG

**Panellists:**

- Mr. Kurleigh Prescod, CEO, *Telecommunications Authority of Trinidad and Tobago*
- Mr. Rushton Paray, Managing Director and Founder of *Computer Technologies & Services Limited (CTSL)*
- Mr. Scofield Thomas, Managing Director, *800 TECH*
- Mr. Keenan Singh, CEO, *Air Link Communications*

**Panel Overview**

This panel examined how the digital divide has continued to shape Trinidad and Tobago's transition toward a digital economy, highlighting how unequal access to technology, digital skills, and affordable connectivity has limited participation, constrained SME competitiveness, and slowed innovation across key sectors. Bringing together voices from government, industry, education, and community development, the discussion explored the realities faced by underserved communities and resource-constrained businesses, the impact of gaps in access, affordability, and digital literacy on national development, and the importance of coordinated public- and private-sector action. The session also considered practical strategies to expand digital infrastructure, build skills, support locally relevant digital solutions, and leverage regional and international initiatives to advance a more inclusive, connected, and resilient digital future for Trinidad and Tobago.



**Question: Do all customers, employees and partners have reliable access to the digital services we expect them to use? Infrastructure, affordability and connectivity.**

- Connectivity is widely available for businesses, however, adoption and effective use of technology lag behind.
- Trinidad and Tobago is among the most connected globally due to competitive telecom environment and investments in infrastructure (submarine cables). There is near-universal broadband access in Trinidad and Tobago.
- Affordability has improved over the years.
- There is no question on access as services are available throughout the country however, there is a divide when you look at geography, competitiveness and responsiveness.
- There are some areas with limited providers which are being looked at by the regulator. In some cases where there may be providers available, competitive options may not be easily leverage due to other factors such as a credit card requirement.
- Crowdsourcing tools have been used to collect data on connectivity. The average broadband speed continues to improve over the years.

**Question: Are we assuming a level of digital literacy that not all users or staff actually have?**

- The Digital Inclusion Survey was done in 2021 and level of adoption of digital technology was one of the areas measured which includes digital literacy.
- The 2026 Digital Inclusion Survey being planned.
- The survey has triggered targeted programs such as for elderly and persons with disabilities funded by Universal Service Fund (USF) and in partnership with other stakeholders. Approximately \$15 million per year is spent from the USF, connecting health centers, schools, community centers, libraries and other public spaces. Over 230 sites are connected with TFWIFI. USF funds have also been used on projects with persons with disabilities such as visual impairments.
- There is a correlation between the unbanked population and digital illiteracy and this group is more susceptible to cybercrime scams for instance.
- Urban centers have more access to fixed broadband internet while rural areas face higher mobile internet costs.
- Younger generations are more digitally savvy and there are generational divides.
- Basic literacy is established but an upgrade is required particularly in terms of having business owners understand the technology and the impact on their environment.
- In terms of remote work, there may be variances in the quality of services which impact work.

**Question: Do all employees benefit equally from digital tools or do some feel left behind?**

- Fear amongst employees is a factor as they may not indicate they are unfamiliar with a technology. Employees may also be using digital tools and are hesitant or not admitting that they are due to insecurities.
- Leaders must communicate the benefits of digital tools and allow responsible AI use.
- There is a fear with AI and job losses so the approach on introducing technologies is critical.
- Employers need to develop an environment as well as policies where employees feel comfortable using technology.
- Approach and language has to be tailored to remove the fear factor - process elimination not people elimination.
- Personal relationships particularly in rural areas are still valued due to cultural factors so technology adoption comes with a degree of hesitancy.
- AI is still learning so the output may not be perfect, therefore, the human review is still required. It helps from a productivity perspective.

**Question: Could our digital initiatives unintentionally exclude parts of our markets or workforce?**

- Trinidad and Tobago is behind regional peers.
- Digital transformation is often misunderstood as a technology upgrade when it should be seen as more of a mind-set.
- Cultural resistance and fear delays digital adoption.
- There needs to be encouragement in use of existing technology to improve services.
- While there is a challenge in slow adoption of technology, slow government adoption can be beneficial to avoid premature implementation.
- There needs to be greater adoption of human focused technology. Digital systems should be designed in a way where persons want to use them.

**Takeaways:**

- Cultural shifts are required when it comes to adoption of technology.
- Public-private partnerships and regional harmonization are vital for effective cyber defense and digital transformation.
- The digital divide extends beyond connectivity to affordability, literacy, accessibility for vulnerable populations, and digital inclusion programs.
- Cultural resistance and fear of job loss hinder technology adoption.
- Leadership must foster psychological safety, transparency, and upskilling opportunities.

## OPEN FORUM

**Moderators:** Mr. Tracy Hackshaw and Mr. Kevon Swift, Directors, *TTMAG*

The Open Forum is the part of the IGF where participants can raise any issue on their minds, whether it be from the panel discussions or on new topics. The key points raised are outlined below.

- There is a need for regional collaboration and solution sharing to avoid reinventing the wheel.
- Importance of data protection, privacy by design, and legislation to keep pace with technological adoption.
- Recognition of culture and mind-set as key factors for successful digital transformation.
- Literacy in areas such as cyber scams, financial literacy, and trust in digital services is essential.

**DAY TWO - JANUARY 30**

## **Welcome Remarks**

### Mr. Dev Gosine, Chair, TT MAG

Mr. Gosine welcomed participants including government officials, educators, youth, and partners to the youth forum being held under the theme: “Technology and the Youth: Impact on Your Well-being” - a critical conversation focusing on youth’s digital lives in 2026.

He emphasized that technology is now an environment youth inhabit, not just a tool. Youth in Trinidad and Tobago are the AI generation, using tools like ChatGPT, Perplexity, Claude AI, and Gemini for personalized learning and career preparation. Social media enables community building and global connection but has mental health costs such as digital fatigue, anxiety (e.g., FOMO), cyberbullying, and impacts on sleep and physical activity.

Mr. Gosine shared that the mission of TTIGF is to promote a safe, inclusive, and resilient internet ecosystem that supports the well-being and digital agency of users, especially youth. The forum encourages youth to share perspectives on AI ethics, online safety, and mental health support. The goal is to ensure youth remain healthy, balanced, and empowered in the process of technological advancement.

### The Honorable Dr. Michael Dowlath, Minister of Education

The Minister highlighted the integration of technology and AI into Trinidad and Tobago’s education system. He gave examples such as AI-supported learning platforms identifying student struggles early, especially in math and language, launching AI tools for exam preparation (SEA and CSEC pass papers), use of speech-to-text and text-to-speech technologies supporting inclusion for students with learning differences, and robotics clubs, coding programs, and tech clubs which promote pathways in cybersecurity, software development, and digital entrepreneurship.

The Minister acknowledged that AI also supports student well-being through mental health apps, study planning, and stress management tools. He emphasised the need to raise students as critical thinkers, ethical digital citizens, and innovators grounded in Caribbean values, rather than mere technology users. The Minister stressed the importance of responsible AI use as it can amplify creativity and opportunity or cause distraction and harm depending on usage, and commended the TTIGF for prioritizing youth well-being in national digital discussions.

## **YOUTH FORUM**

### **Opening and Ground Rules**

The Youth Forum was moderated by students from the RSC Tech Club: Cameron Maharaj and Swasti Maharaj, who established an informal and open environment to encourage active participation. Ground rules emphasized respectful dialogue, avoidance of spamming or profanity, and observing speaking turns to ensure inclusive discussion.

The Forum involved the participation of over 40 secondary schools with several students from each school and focused on three key thematic areas:

1. AI companions and chatbots;
2. Social media and algorithms; and
3. Digital literacy.

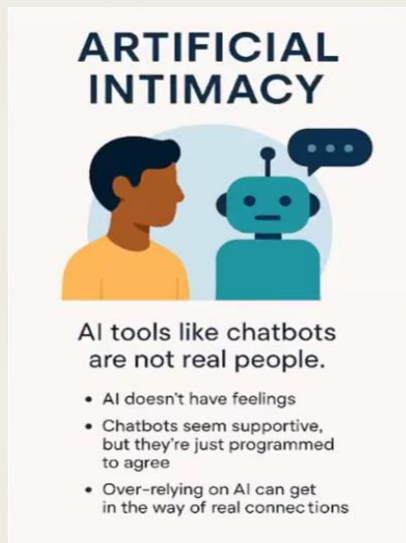
### **AI Companions and Chatbots**

Participants explored the ethical boundaries, social implications, and emotional dimensions of AI companionship.

Key reflections included:

- AI can provide information, explanations, and conversational support; however, it lacks genuine emotional understanding, empathy, and accountability.
- Overreliance on AI for emotional reassurance may substitute human relationships and weaken personal judgment.
- Chatbots often provide agreeable and validating responses, potentially reinforcing confirmation bias and limiting critical thinking.
- Students observed that frequent AI use may reduce independent problem-solving and creativity.
- Concerns were raised regarding AI “hallucinations,” where false or fabricated information may mislead users.
- Emotional attachment to AI is possible but recognized as one-sided imitation rather than true consciousness or empathy.

Students acknowledged that AI may serve as a useful support tool for socially anxious individuals or as a practice platform for communication. However, consensus was clear that AI cannot replace authentic human relationships.



Discussions also highlighted risks of emotional dependency, manipulation, and reinforcement of harmful behaviors—particularly among vulnerable youth. Participants stressed the importance of reminding minors that AI is not human and advocated for reasonable usage limits and stronger AI literacy education.

### **AI in Learning and Emotional Support**

A multimedia presentation examined AI's role in education and personal development.

Benefits identified:

- Instant access to information;
- Personalized learning support; and
- A non-judgmental environment for asking questions.

Risks identified:

- Reduced opportunities for developing empathy, resilience, and real-world interpersonal skills;
- Potential overdependence; and
- Inability of AI to provide genuine affection, love, or emotional care.

Participants emphasized the need to balance AI's utility with human interaction.

### **Social Media and Algorithms**

The discussion shifted to the influence of social media algorithms on youth behavior and well-being.

Students noted that algorithms prioritize engagement rather than accuracy or user welfare. Common impacts discussed included:

- Creation of echo chambers and filter bubbles that limit exposure to diverse perspectives.
- Promotion of unrealistic beauty standards and social comparison.

- Increased anxiety, mood fluctuations, and body image concerns.
- Addictive behaviors such as doom-scrolling.



Several youth participants shared personal experiences of reducing or deleting social media due to negative mental health effects. While many were aware of algorithmic nudging, participants acknowledged difficulty in consciously managing its influence.

Ethical concerns were raised about the extent to which algorithms shape user behavior without explicit awareness or consent. The importance of maintaining authenticity, mental well-being, and critical thinking online was emphasized.

### Digital Literacy: Definition and Importance

Digital literacy was defined as the ability to understand, manage, evaluate, and responsibly use digital tools and platforms.

Key components identified included:

- Awareness of data collection, tracking, and algorithmic systems.
- Ability to identify misinformation, bias, scams, and deepfakes.
- Confidence to disengage from digital platforms when overwhelmed.
- Understanding digital footprints and long-term online consequences.

Participants introduced the concept of “digital nutrition,” encouraging balanced screen time and intentional digital consumption.

AI literacy was highlighted as increasingly essential, potentially becoming as fundamental as reading, writing, and mathematics. Schools and communities were encouraged to implement structured digital and AI literacy programmes incorporating practical exercises, fact-checking skills, and ethical use principles.

## Practical Strategies for Safe Digital Use

The Forum concluded with practical tools for responsible digital engagement, including the “Stop, Think, Choose, Check” framework:

- **Stop** before clicking or posting impulsively.
- **Think** about motivations and potential emotional impact.
- **Choose** actions that support well-being and responsible communication.
- **Check** information for accuracy, credibility, and safety.

### Boundaries

- Digital literacy supports healthy digital boundaries.
- Helps teens set limits on engagement and sharing.
- Reinforces personal privacy and consent practices.
- Encourages conscious decisions about when to join or step away from digital spaces.

Students shared examples of how they would apply this framework in academic research, social media engagement, and digital communication.

## Conclusion

The TTIGF Youth Forum provided a dynamic platform for young people to critically examine the opportunities and risks associated with AI and social media. Discussions underscored the importance of maintaining human connection, strengthening digital and AI literacy, and fostering critical thinking to navigate increasingly complex digital environments responsibly.

## **PANEL SESSION**

### **THE HUMAN COST OF INNOVATION – MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

#### **Moderators:**

- Ms. Jacqueline Morris, Director, *TTMAG*
- Mr. Andrew Proudfoot, Director, *TTMAG*

#### **Panellists:**

- Mr. Brandon Subero, Clinical Psychologist, *Elder Associates Limited*
- Dr. Miranda Foon, Psychiatrist

#### **Panel Overview**

As digital innovation accelerates, so does its impact on our mental health. In Trinidad and Tobago, where mental issues are often stigmatised, the pressure of 24/7 connectivity, social media comparison, and AI anxiety is growing, especially among our young people. This session moved beyond the buzzwords to explore exactly how technology reinforces stress and burnout, what organisations must do to help, and – most importantly – shared specific, practical tools you can use immediately to increase your mental resilience.



**Question: What is the problem that we have? The youth forum made reference to the algorithm. Has the algorithm monetised our fear?**

- Seeing certain content stimulates neurotransmitters in the brain and over activates dopamine. This is the reason for some psychological disorders such as bipolar disorder and schizophrenia.
- Persons are spending hours consuming online content and for some, such as with gaming for instance, there is difficulty differentiating reality.
- The algorithm creates anxiousness and addiction by encouraging persons to absorb more information.
- Persons have the fear of missing out hence they feel the need to consume more information.

**Question: We see trauma on social media including graphic content. Can the brain differentiate watching a tragedy online vs experiencing it in real life or do we feel the same?**

- There are vulnerable individuals who cannot differentiate content vs real life. Persons who suffer from depression or bipolar disorder may be especially vulnerable.
- Engagement is a factor so if posting crime increases engagement then that is the content which will be shared.
- Technology amplifies information.

**Question: On the Internet there may be the toxicity of anonymity - Is this affecting us and our culture?**

- Persons are fearful of being vulnerable and being ridiculed.
- The Internet breeds a greater frustration and anger within society as persons care more about their online persona than their real life perception.
- It empowers people to say things they can't in real life.
- Freedom of speech should not harm others.

**Question: Is there is a link between social media and depression among youths and professionals? Can negative interactions online shape personalities?**

- Visual impact is powerful and long lasting and can impact on our brain.

**Question: Can we look at current laws to seek justice for things happening online?**

- Laws can be used to sue persons for defamation however persons may not know this is possible.

**Question: What are your thoughts on the use of AI for therapy?**

- In some countries there is therapy delivered via an avatar however, it is done by licensed professionals.
- Reinforcement from AI can lead to negative outcomes. AI programs are taught to agree with what we are saying which is where the problem lies.
- There is over-reliance on technology to guide us.
- Persons are becoming more comfortable in online setting as opposed to in-person interactions.

**Question: Technology is facilitating work outside the office where it's almost an expectation that employees should be able to respond outside regular hours. In some countries like France, there are laws to uphold work-life balance. Should there be considerations towards this in Trinidad and Tobago?**

- Theory vs practice and the trickledown effect. Adults may feel like they are competing or be fearful of job loss and this can impact children.
- Remote work can blur the lines of a work-life balance but there are several environmental factors which can impact this.
- Adults stay back late or take work home due to fear of losing their jobs.

**Topic: Digital Detox and persons deleting social media**

- Stimulation is contagious and consistent.
- Social media creates a false sense of identity.
- Gaming addictions are a real problem.

**Question: Is the stigma of mental health improving?**

- The stigma has decreased and more persons are up taking employee assistance programs or mental health assistance programs.
- Mental health days should be something considered by organisations
- Sick leave for mental health disorders are granted.

**Takeaways**

- Constant digital connectivity and exposure to negative content affect brain chemistry and mental health.
- Digital addiction manifests as excessive gaming, social media use, and inability to separate virtual from real life.
- Mental health stigma remains but is gradually decreasing with increased awareness and therapy use.
- Employers urged to be sensitive to employee mental health, encouraging breaks, mindfulness, and work-life balance.
- Digital detox and controlled use of technology is recommended to mitigate negative effects.

## PANEL SESSION

### AI, CYBER RESILIENCE AND REGIONAL INNOVATION

**Moderator:** Mr. Ajmal Nazir, Director, TTMAG

**Panellists:**

- Mr. Anish Bachu, Manager, TTCSIRT
- Ms. Esther Callender-George, President, *Information Systems Audit and Control Association (ISACA) Trinidad and Tobago Chapter*
- Mr. Anthony Peyson, President, *ISC2 Caribbean Chapter*

### Panel Overview

This panel explored how the rapid proliferation of artificial intelligence has been reshaping the cybersecurity landscape, presenting powerful new tools for defense alongside increasingly sophisticated avenues for attack. With a focus on Trinidad and Tobago and the wider CARICOM region, the discussion examined AI's dual role in enhancing cyber resilience, including its application in predictive threat detection, automated incident response, and the protection of critical infrastructure, while also highlighting how malicious actors have leveraged generative AI to scale fraud, deepfake attacks, and adaptive malware. Panellists analysed the implications for key sectors such as financial services, energy, and tourism, as well as the broader challenges facing regional innovation, including skills gaps and evolving governance frameworks. The session underscored the importance of targeted investments, policy development, and capacity-building to ensure AI is leveraged securely, ethically, and competitively across the Caribbean.



**Question: Governance and Reality - Where do you see the biggest disconnect with cybersecurity and AI risks on paper vs how they are actually managed in practice in Trinidad and Tobago?**

- Governance is not treated as a critical component of systems which impacts security.
- AI is a new tool that can potentially be harmful if not used properly. ChatGPT for instance provides a disclaimer that answers may not be as accurate as needed.
- Data sources that AI uses to provide answers are becoming polluted.
- Paper work and training is done from a professional perspective but from an organizational perspective, implementation of the technology is slow.
- Policymakers need to help implement proper governance.
- New technologies are emerging and ICT teams are consistently challenged with implementation, often without governing frameworks.
- There is a responsibility to guide innovation.

**Question: AI is changing the threat landscape, are current risk models and controls still fit for purpose?**

- AI has compounded the frequency and sophistication of threats.
- Companies are making investments for brand protection due to the changing threat landscapes and the rise of deepfakes etc.
- There is a need to examine basic controls and ensure the human element stays. Human controls/human in the loop are one of the controls you can implement to manage constantly evolving threats, together with the use of machine controls.
- There is a need to ensure that everyone is digitally literate.

**Question: How can organisations manage the use of AI in terms of employees using confidential data?**

- User awareness is required on how to use AI responsibility along with parameters for use and repercussions.
- Monitoring tools can be used on devices and usage should inform policies
- Organisations can choose to: 1. do nothing, 2. block AI tools, 3. create its own AI platform for employee use. The third option is being done internationally and is commercially available.

**Question: What's being done to secure the data that AI leverages within organisations?**

- Technical controls: ensuring any information leaving your company's network is monitored and managed.

- Administrative controls: these come with governance and require HR policies and staff awareness.
- Back to basics: proper cybersecurity, information security and data protection. Have a layered, holistic approach.

**Question: RACI matrix for a national scale - who is responsible for cyber risk at the national level?**

- The final responsibility would be lie with those held accountable for cybersecurity in an organisation eg. the Board of Directors. Within Boards, there should be at least one person with expertise in cybersecurity.
- From an AI perspective, it is a shared responsibility. AI is not only technical as you have the human aspect so Legal, IT, HR are all involved.
- Nationally, we have a mix of government bodies and regulatory agencies for oversight.
- It is a shared responsibility as there is no one organisation within Government that does everything required. Coordination is the challenge.
- Within Trinidad and Tobago, cybersecurity falls under the Ministry of Homeland Security.
- An inter-ministerial committee for cybersecurity has been created to encourage cooperation among agencies and promote coordination.

**Question: What role do frameworks and certifications have to play in cybersecurity?**

- Frameworks are good building blocks but can create hurdles and there is the tendency to get things done to tick a box.
- Assurance and audit is needed to determine that these frameworks are working efficiently.

**Question: With respect to the skills gap, are certifications capability or capacity? Is the bigger issue lack of certification or lack of institutional capability?**

- With regard to tertiary programs, there is misalignment with what students are taught and what the industry really is.
- Students are unable to apply knowledge practically. The TTCSIRT has brought students into their team to give practical insights and show what skills are required.
- Are there sufficient positions to hire persons trained? Talent tends to migrate or sits idle due to lack of demand for skillset. Capacity is an issue for the Caribbean. While we do not have large populations, there is a need for certified and capable professionals.

- There are skills that cannot be taught. Competency based issues show gaps in critical thinking and ability to influence others.
- Real world experience teaches a lot. Joining professional organizations such as ISACA can provide opportunities for volunteer work which provides experience. ISACA and ISC2 can collaborate on this.
- Business drives the need for cybersecurity. In order to provide value to the company, you need to understand the business and your role within the organisation.
- Graduates can look for opportunities to develop their own innovations.

**Question: Is it a lack of jobs or lack of understanding by organisations of the skills and needs?**

- It depends on the maturity and size of the organisation. There is some need for education for HR professionals on the requirements for certain jobs particularly in the changing landscape.

**Question: If you were the Minister responsible for cybersecurity, what investment would you make over the next two years to ensure cybersecurity and cyber resilience in an AI driven threat environment? People, policy or platform?**

- Process: to invest in a cybersecurity solution you have to understand the current risk profile. A cybersecurity assessment is needed to develop the processes needed for cyber infrastructure.
- If the organization has no cybersecurity capabilities, then conduct a quick evaluation of what exists that can be installed quickly.
- All three are needed. Assess the critical persons needed to implement and use the technology, use machines to fight machines and create policy to ensure accountability.
- From a national perspective, long term cyber resilience involves the development of a cybersecurity conscious culture. This starts with investment in children at the primary and secondary school level.

**Takeaways**

- There is a need for governance frameworks, human training, and coordination across government and private sectors.
- Cybersecurity education and training gap: need to align academic programs with industry needs and provide hands-on experience.
- Collaboration between ISC2, ISACA, government, and academia to build regional AI and cybersecurity capacity.
- Prioritizing education and capacity building from early school levels to create a culture of cyber resilience.

## **Presentation**

### **Caribbean AI Task Force**

#### **Presenters:**

- Mr. Shernon Osepa, Strategic Adviser, Caribbean Telecommunications Union and Coordinator, Caribbean AI Task Force; and
- Dr. Craig Ramlal, Director, AI Innovation Center, UWI St. Augustine Campus and Chair, Caribbean AI Task Force.

#### **Key Points**

- The CTU Caribbean AI Task Force was launched in 2025 to develop a harmonized regional AI policy framework, governance mechanisms, and capacity-building initiatives. The Task Force was given a one (1) year mandate.
- Objectives include data infrastructure improvement, regional AI innovation funds, building regional AI capacity, inclusive AI for sustainable development, and multistakeholder collaborative governance.
- The interim report (publicly available) outlines recommendations and invites feedback from stakeholders to finalize a declaration at the June 2026 Caribbean AI Forum. Some of the recommendations include:
  - Establish a harmonised regional AI policy framework;
  - Enact model laws and harmonise;
  - Set up minimum regional standards and codes of practice;
  - Create a national AI advisory committee and a regional oversight body;
  - Modernise and harmonise data protection laws;
  - Prioritise open source models for the Caribbean;
  - Provide government incentives for AI initiatives.
- The emphasis of the Task Force is on contextual AI solutions targeting regional challenges such as climate change, health, tourism and agriculture, rather than replicating global frontier AI models.
- Ongoing projects are supported by international organizations (UNESCO, UNDP) complement regional AI development efforts.
- The Task Force plans to align projects to agreed policies to ensure active implementation beyond documentation.

**PARTNERS**





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