

Almost \$12m for Tobago Carnival

...Ferries and villas sold out

■ Elizabeth Williams

THE 2025 Tobago October Carnival will be held at a cost of just under \$12 million.

This was announced by Tobago House of Assembly (THA) Tourism Secretary Tashia Burris as the festival was launched on Wednesday night at the Comfort Inn & Suites Orange Hill, under the theme, 'Mud, Mas and Music'. It is scheduled to be held from October 24 to 26. During the launch event, Burris revealed the significant investment of the THA over the years into the festival.

'Over the past three years the THA has invested over \$33 million to ensure the growth, sustainability and stability of the October Carnival. This year we reaffirm our commitment with continued support because we believe in the power of this festival to transform Tobago's economy and cultural landscape,' she said.

She also announced grant funding that would assist stakeholders.

'I am pleased to make a special announcement-the Tobago House of Assembly will be launching a Tourism and Creative Sector grant programme. This initiative represents our investment in entrepreneurs who drive our creative and tourism economies particularly those involved in the business of Carnival we are making \$2 million immediately available to support these entrepreneurs in time for this event,' she said.

She announced grants of up to \$30,000 would be made available for businesses that qualify, as well as a loan component with a ceiling of up to \$250,000. This programme, she reported, would be administered by the Business Development Unit under the Division of Finance.

The Tourism Secretary is also calling for additional flights on the airbridge to assist in the transportation of visitors to and from Tobago for the 2025 October Carnival.

'Our ferries are already sold out we are just waiting on Caribbean Airlines to come through with the extra flights. I am putting a plug publicly for those extra flights to drop,' she said.

Ferry tickets were sold out for the weekend of the October Carnival after additional seats were implemented by the Port Authority earlier this week. Chairman of the Tobago arm of the T&T Chamber of Industry and Commerce Curtis Williams, during a news conference at the event, boasted about the increases for the accommodation sector.

'The business sector is all geared and ready. It is going to be a real bumper Carnival. From the information I got from the villa owners, they are 100% full and there is no room, so you would have to look for bigger properties. The Carnival is extremely well patronised,' he said.

More than a festival

CEO of the Tobago Festivals Commission Kern Cowan said the third edition of the Tobago October Carnival is looked at as more than just a festival, 'but a bold expression of freedom and creativity, where traditional meets contemporary, rustic meets beauty, mud meets masquerade and enigma meets majesty.

'As we officially begin the journey to what promises to be an unforgettable Carnival, Tobago's Carnival is more than just an event, but is a developing gem-one with the power to position Tobago as the greatest little island on the planet,