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Caribbean CTO Brief

Issue 5



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1. T&T's AI Readiness Assessment Must Deliver Governance Rules, a Pilot Pipeline and a Skills Plan

Signal Trinidad & Tobago has launched a landmark national AI readiness assessment with UNDP and UNESCO, framed by government as a “new oil and gas”-scale opportunity for the economy. The assessment will review infrastructure, skills, data governance and ethics with consultations in early 2026, landing in a context where T&T has already deployed **Anansi**, a national AI-powered assistant for government services.

Series context This is the hinge between earlier Brief items on cloud/cyber foundations and the emerging wave of AI public-service agents: it’s the moment when those assistants either get clear guardrails and a coherent investment logic, or remain isolated pilots.

Pilot Watch – the governance and investment rules that come out of this process will effectively decide how far and how fast a first wave of Caribbean public-service AI agents scale, including:

- **Anansi (T&T)** – national AI assistant for government services
- **AskGov (Guyana)** – agentic AI assistant for the Digital Guyana citizen portal
- **Garvey (Jamaica)** – JLIP AI assistant to explain constitutional and legal language
- **Constable Smart (Jamaica)** – AI law-enforcement assistant for the JCF

[Source & date \(T&T AI readiness\)](#)

- [TTT](#) – “T&T Launches Landmark National Artificial Intelligence (AI) Readiness Assessment With UNDP And UNESCO”, 26 Nov 2025
- [Trinidad & Tobago Newsday](#) – “Could AI be Trinidad and Tobago’s new ‘oil and gas’ frontier?”, 27 Nov 2025

2. US\$6.7B Jamaica Hurricane Melissa Package Is the New Benchmark for Climate + Digital Financing

- **Signal** After Hurricane Melissa caused an estimated US\$8.8B in damage ($\approx 44\%$ of 2024 GDP), Jamaica has secured up to US\$6.7B over three years from CAF, CDB, IDB Group, IMF and the World Bank, blending around US\$3.6B in sovereign financing with roughly US\$2.4B in private-investment envelopes. The package is framed around “building back better” and long-term resilience, implicitly covering digital infrastructure and data systems alongside physical reconstruction.
- **Series context** This is the clearest financing template yet in the Brief series for where climate, disaster and digital agendas actually meet, giving other Caribbean governments a concrete reference when they try to bolt fibre, data platforms and smart services onto future climate or recovery envelopes.
- **Pilot Watch Yes** – sets the structure future post-disaster digital and data projects will need to mirror.
- **Source & date**
- IMF, 1 Dec 2025
 - <https://www.imf.org/en/news/articles/2025/12/01/pr25400-jamaica-billions-over-3-years-for-recovery-and-reconstruct-after-hurricane-melissa>
- Reuters, 1 Dec 2025
 - <https://www.reuters.com/business/environment/jamaica-secures-up-67-bln-post-hurricane-melissa-reconstruction-2025-12-01/>
- CAF, 1 Dec 2025
 - <https://www.caf.com/en/currently/news/jamaica-secures-a-package-of-us-67-billion-over-three-years-in-international-support-for-recovery-and-reconstruction-after-hurricane-melissa/>
- **Time-sensitive? High** – project pipelines for the US\$6.7B are being shaped now.

3. Caribbean Payment Innovation Needs a Funded Security & Skills Track, Not Just CBDC Hype

- **Impact:** High
- **Signal** A detailed Trinidad Guardian piece traces the shift from cash and legacy card switches (Infolink) to DCash, tokenised deposits, UPI-style instant payments and CBDC discussions, warning that AI-driven fraud and synthetic identities threaten these rails if skills and controls lag. It points to a need for roughly 500 regional professionals in blockchain security, CBDC architecture and AI-fraud detection over five years as a rough measure of the gap.
- **Series context** This takes the Brief’s recurring digital-trust theme into the core of the financial system: payments are no longer a narrow fintech topic but a central piece of the region’s digital public infrastructure story, sitting alongside identity, data-exchange and cyber as a sovereignty issue.
- **Pilot Watch Yes** – especially for any new CBDC or UPI-style pilots that will live or die on fraud controls and identity assurance.
- **Source & date**

- Trinidad Guardian, 27 Nov 2025
 - <https://www.guardian.co.tt/business/securing-the-future-of-caribbean-payment-innovation-6.2.2458675.af1f5e04a9>
 - Extended remarks – <https://pinaka.co.tt/securing-caribbean-payment-innovation/>
 - **Time-sensitive? Medium-High** – technology and fraud tools are moving regardless of policy timelines.
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4. EU-Caribbean BRIDGE Facility Gives MSMEs up to EUR 100k for Digital & Green Upgrades

- **Signal** The EU-funded BRIDGE (Building Resilient Innovation for Digital & Green Enterprises) facility, implemented by Caribbean Export under Global Gateway, offers MSMEs up to EUR 100,000 in co-financing for 12-month digital and green projects, with firms contributing at least 40%; the latest Digital Transformation window closed on 2 Dec 2025 after a post-Melissa extension. Even with this round finished, the facility stands out for its regional scope, structured timelines and emphasis on measurable business transformation.
 - **Series context** BRIDGE is the private-sector counterpart to the Brief's public-infrastructure stories, showing how SMEs can be nudged onto e-payments, cloud, platforms and data tools in ways that align with the digital public infrastructure narrative rather than creating parallel, disconnected schemes.
 - **Pilot Watch Yes** – as a model for 12-month, KPI-driven digital sprints that national SME and export programmes can emulate or co-fund.
 - **Source & date**
 - Facility overview – <https://carib-export.com/resources/funding/bridge/>
 - Digital Transformation call – <https://carib-export.com/opportunities/digital-transformation-bridge/>
 - Launch & context – <https://caribbeannewsglobal.com/the-european-union-caribbean-export-launch-bridge-facility-to-accelerate-sme-growth/>
 - **Time-sensitive? Medium** – current call is closed; insights from this round will shape the next.
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5. Digicel–Highway Duct-Sharing Deal Shows How to Bury Critical Fibre Fast

- **Signal** In response to Hurricane Melissa's damage to overhead infrastructure, Digicel Jamaica and the Jamaica North-South Highway Company have struck a deal to share underground ducts so fibre can run through highway infrastructure instead of on poles, promising faster deployment and greater resilience. The arrangement depends heavily on rights-of-way, existing concession terms and regulator-approved models for access and pricing.
- **Series context** This is the Brief series' most concrete example of climate resilience applied to telecoms: it sits alongside prior coverage of sovereign cloud and cyber-hardening as a practical, infrastructure-level pattern that other Caribbean states can adapt in selected corridors rather than via sweeping, all-at-once rebuilds.
- **Pilot Watch Yes** – a single "resilience corridor" pilot could become the reference model for dig-once and duct-sharing policy across the region.

- **Source & date**
 - Jamaica Observer, 1 Dec 2025
– <https://www.jamaicaobserver.com/2025/12/01/digicel-moves-hurricane-proof-fibre-network/>
 - **Time-sensitive? Medium** – most relevant while reconstruction and climate-resilience financing are active discussions.
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Trendline – Climate Money Meets Digital Public Infrastructure

Across these five items, the arc of the Brief series sharpens: **climate and disaster finance is emerging as the fastest path to serious infrastructure budgets**, and multilateral actors are explicitly pushing a **digital public infrastructure** lens (ID, payments, data-exchange) for how those funds should be structured. T&T's AI assessment, Jamaica's Melissa package, the payment-security debate, BRIDGE's SME projects and duct-sharing in Jamaica all sit on this seam between resilience, inclusion and digital trust.

Verified Future – Trusted Rails Under AI, Payments and MSMEs

The direction of travel across issues now points to a regional stack where:

- AI systems in government are treated as **auditable public infrastructure**, not black-box tools.
- Payment rails are designed on the assumption of **AI-enabled attackers**, with identity, fraud analytics and incident response built in.
- MSME digital programmes are expected to plug firms into shared rails (e-ID, e-payments, e-invoicing) rather than isolated platforms.

In that "verified future", AI, payments and SME digitalisation are all evaluated as parts of the same **Caribbean digital trust stack**: who and what can be verified, how fast systems recover under shock, and whether the benefits land locally rather than leaking out through dependency on external platforms and expertise.

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Senior Software Test Automation Engineer

Highway duct sharing excites me 😊

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