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**NIHERST**

NATIONAL INSTITUTE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION
RESEARCH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

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Dear Editor / Head of Department

Shell Trinidad and Tobago & NIHERST Celebrate Student Innovation at 2026

Shell NXplorers Award Ceremony

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago - May 22, 2026. Shell Trinidad and Tobago Ltd., in partnership with The National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST), celebrated the creativity, innovation and, problem-solving capacity of students at the **2026 Shell NXplorers Award Ceremony**.

The ceremony recognised secondary and tertiary students who used the Shell NXplorers methodology to examine complex real-world challenges and develop practical, sustainable solutions. This year's projects included concepts such as a Smart Solar Transit Hub, an Integrated Flood Resilience System, sargassum-based building materials, a biotechnology and artificial intelligence monitoring system with an RNA fungicide to reduce black pod disease in cocoa trees, and a system to repurpose Giant African Snails into eco-friendly building material.

Shell NXplorers, powered locally by NIHERST, is designed to equip young people with a new way of thinking and the tools to address complex challenges in their careers, organisations, communities and the wider world. The programme is grounded in the Food-Water-Energy Nexus and encourages students to use NXthinking, which draws on systems thinking, scenario planning, and theory of change.

Speaking on behalf of the Institute, NIHERST's Chairman, Dr. Indira Rampersad, shared *that "In 2019, Shell Trinidad and Tobago partnered with NIHERST to deliver the STREAM Programme, with NXplorers as its flagship initiative. The aim was to give students a practical, hands-on way of engaging with science, technology, and problem-solving.*

Since then, that partnership has grown significantly, with more than 80,000 students along with over 1,500 teachers in Trinidad and Tobago participating and exposed to new ways of thinking, collaborating, and solving real-world challenges."

Commenting on the Global Impact of Shell NXplorers, Simone David, Finance Manager, Shell Trinidad and Tobago Ltd., stated, *"This global programme was designed to help young people by giving them the tools and strategies to recognise how they can shape and create change. Transforming STEM from simply a subject into a meaningful and attainable career aspiration. That is our legacy. Passing on what we know, investing in who they are becoming, and doing it with pride."*

During the feature address, Senator, Professor Emeritus, the Honourable Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training, expressed that **“We need to look at mathematics training in this country and bring it alive, it is not a dead subject, it is not meant to punish people. If we have to do research and solve problems in this country, then mathematics must be provided...the Ministry is looking at skills training.”**

At the ceremony, a special Global Merit Award was also presented to the ReCoGen Grid Team, following recognition through the Shell NXplorers Global Inspiration Awards. The award acknowledged an exceptional student project that placed Trinidad and Tobago on the global NXplorers map.

2026 Shell NXplorers Award Winners

Category	Award / Placement	Winner(s)	Prize
Global Recognition	Global Merit Award for an Exceptional Student Project	ReCoGen Grid Team: Tariq Mohammed, Alyssa Persaud and Abbida Khan	Gift Package – Shell Global
Secondary School	Most Innovative Project	Arima Central Secondary School	\$1,500 (UTC Units)
Secondary School	Most Impactful Project	Five Rivers Secondary School	\$1,500 (UTC Units)
Secondary School	3rd Place	Five Rivers Secondary School	\$10,500 (UTC Units)
Secondary School	2nd Place	Open Bible High School	\$13,500 (UTC Units)
Secondary School	1st Place	Arima Central Secondary School	\$16,500 (UTC Units)
Tertiary	Most Innovative Tertiary Project	Richard Rennie, Priya Jaimungal, Tyrel Griffith, Janaya Medina and Thyi-Chee Ramnarine	\$1,500 (UTC Units)
Tertiary	Most Impactful Tertiary Project	Keedanu Halls, Samuel Blache, Asia Cooper and Imani Zakuri	\$1,500 (UTC Units)
Tertiary	3rd Place — The Solar Smart Transit Hub	Carisse Nandal, Rianna Sammy, Andre Cournand, Yelayna Mohan and Maya Nanan	\$13,500 (UTC Units)
Tertiary	2nd Place — Sarga Blocks	Chelsea Ramjattan, Naomi Cadette, Annissa Patrick, Amanda Bishop and Xavier Raghunanan	\$15,000 (UTC Units)
Tertiary	1st Place — The Integrated Flood Resilience System (IFRS)	Keedanu Halls, Samuel Blache, Asia Cooper and Imani Zakuri	\$18,000 (UTC Units)
Scholarship Winners	Shell NXplorers Energy and Innovation Academic Scholarship	Govinda Maharaj and Andre Cournand	\$35,000 each (UTC Units)

The ceremony also acknowledged the important role of parents, educators, facilitators, school leaders, tertiary institutions, and social investors in supporting students throughout the Shell NXplorers journey.

NIHERST congratulates all awardees and participants for their commitment to innovation, sustainability, and national progress, and reaffirms its commitment to expanding access to science, technology, and innovation education across Trinidad and Tobago.

Photos:



Caption: Ms. Simone David, Finance Manager, Shell Trinidad and Tobago Ltd



Caption: Senator, Professor Emeritus, the Honorable Prakash Persad, Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training



Caption: Dr. Indira Rampersad, Chairman - NIHERST



Caption (L-R): Mr. Andre Thompson (Governor - NIHERST), Dr. Sharmilla Harry (Deputy Chairman - NIHERST), Ms. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor - Shell Trinidad and Tobago Ltd), Dr. Indira Rampersad (Chairman - NIHERST), Dr. Fazal Ali (President – NIHERST), Ms. Usha Rampersad-Gokool (Governor-NIHERST) and Ms. Nakita Patterson (Governor – NIHERST).



Caption: Dr. Fazal Ali (President – NIHERST) with 1st place winners in the Tertiary and Secondary Categories



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago) with 1st place winners in the Secondary Category Arima Central Secondary School



Caption: Dr. Indira Rampersad (Chairman – NIHERST) with 2nd place winners in the Secondary Category Open Bible High School



Caption: Dr. Indira Rampersad (Chairman – NIHERST) with 3rd place winners in the Secondary Category Five Rivers Secondary School



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago) with 1st place winners in the Tertiary Category The Department of Dry Affairs (Keedanu Halls, Samuel Blache, Asia Cooper, Imani Zakuri).



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago) with 2nd place winners in the Tertiary Category Sarga Blocks (Chelsea Ramjattan, Naomi Cadette, Annessa Patrick, Amanda Bishop, Xavier Raghunanan).



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago) with 3rd place winners in the Tertiary Category The Solar Smart Transit Hub (Carisse Nandal, Andre Courand, Rianna Sammy, Yelayna Mohan, Maya Nanan).



Caption: Senator the Honourable Professor Prakash Persad (Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training) with Most Innovative Project winners in the Tertiary Category GASOL (Richard Rennie, Priya Jaimungal, Tyrel Griffith, Janaya Medina, Thyi-Chee Ramnarine).



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago), Dr. Fazal Ali (President – NIHERST), Dr. Indira Rampersad (Chairman - NIHERST), and Senator the Honourable Professor Prakash Persad (Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training) with NXplorers Scholarship Winner Andre Courand



Caption: Mrs. Ryssa Brathwaite (Social Performance and Social Investment Advisor – Shell Trinidad & Tobago), Dr. Fazal Ali (President – NIHERST), Dr. Indira Rampersad (Chairman - NIHERST), and Senator the Honourable Professor Prakash Persad (Minister of Tertiary Education and Skills Training) with NXplorers Scholarship Winner Govinda Maharaj

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About NIHERST

The National Institute of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology (NIHERST) is a statutory body committed to promoting the development of science, technology and higher education in Trinidad and Tobago, while supporting innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship across the national community.

About Shell NXplorers

Shell NXplorers is a global educational programme that equips young people with tools and methodologies to tackle complex and interconnected challenges. The programme focuses on the Food-Water-Energy Nexus and encourages systems thinking, scenario planning, collaboration and practical problem-solving.