



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

To the House of Assembly

by

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Minister of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport

EMANCIPATION COMMEMORATION 2026

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Mr. Speaker, as Bermuda prepares to observe the Cup Match holiday, we are reminded that these two days represent far more than a cherished sporting tradition. They invite us to remember the painful legacy of enslavement, honour the resilience of our ancestors, and reflect on the freedoms that were so hard won.

Mr. Speaker, the first day of the holiday is Emancipation Day, marking the abolition of enslavement in Bermuda and commemorating those who endured enslavement while never losing hope for freedom. The second day is Mary Prince Day, when we honour one of Bermuda's National Heroes, whose courage in telling her story helped advance the abolitionist cause across the British Empire.

Mr. Speaker, the legacy of Mary Prince extends well beyond the pages of history. As the first woman of African descent to publish an autobiography, her narrative, “The History of Mary Prince”, ensured that the realities of enslavement could not be dismissed or forgotten. Her voice continues to remind us of the importance of truth, courage, and the enduring value of human dignity. As Bermudians, we take pride in knowing that one of our own helped shape a movement that changed lives far beyond our shores.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Culture has once again curated a calendar of events to mark the commemoration of emancipation. Featuring both Departmental and community-led events, it offers opportunities for learning, remembrance, and community engagement. The full calendar is available to view at culture.bm.

Mr. Speaker, among these events is one of our signature offerings: the premiere of a documentary film “Black Enterprise in Bermuda: Trials, Tribulations, Triumphs”, which celebrates the ingenuity, resilience, and achievements of Black Bermudians in business across generations. This film has been created for the Department of Culture by Marquedelle Rodriguez in collaboration with historian and researcher Meredith Ebbin.

Mr. Speaker, commemorating Emancipation is not solely about remembering the hardships of the past. It is also about recognising the extraordinary accomplishments of Black Bermudians, whose perseverance, talent, and leadership have helped build the Bermuda we know today. It is also about carrying forward the values of freedom, equity, and respect so that future generations inherit a more just and inclusive Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate Emancipation Day and Mary Prince Day, let us honour our history with honesty, celebrate the resilience of those who came before us, and carry their legacy forward with pride.

Mr. Speaker, On the sporting side of the upcoming Emancipation celebrations, in just two weeks, on 30th and 31st July, Bermuda will once

again come together to celebrate a cherished and time-honoured tradition, the Annual Cup Match Classic. This iconic event unites us as a community, transcending boundaries of age, race, and background as we celebrate our shared love of cricket, camaraderie, and the vibrant culture that makes our island so unique.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly the time of year when the spirit of rivalry and unity shines brightest. Workplaces and homes are proudly adorned in light blue and dark blue or red and blue, while supporters dress from head to toe in their team colours. It is certainly the one time of year when wearing the wrong colours will almost certainly result in some good-natured teasing.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to this year's host, Somerset Cricket Club, under the leadership of President Richard Scott, his committee, the organisers, sponsors, and the countless volunteers who are working tirelessly to make this year's Cup Match a success.

Each year, the Government is pleased to provide financial assistance to the host club to support the delivery of this beloved national event, and this year is no exception. While we all look forward to the excitement and celebration of Cup Match, the Government also wants to ensure that everyone can enjoy the festivities safely. To that end, the Ministry of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport has committed \$70,000 in total funding to support Somerset Cricket Club in hosting this year's event, including funding for a professional engineering company to inspect and certify the safety of the scaffolding structures erected for the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to acknowledge the President of St. George's Cricket Club, Neil Paynter, who has returned to the role after a brief break, along with his executive, volunteers, players and supporters. The dedication and commitment shown by both clubs ensure that Cup Match remains one of Bermuda's most treasured annual traditions.

Before I conclude, **Mr. Speaker**, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the much anticipated 28th Annual Mini Cup Match, hosted by the Department of Sport and Recreation. This celebrated event will take place on Friday, 24th July, at Somerset Cricket Club.

This year's match will see the defending champions, Somerset, take on St. George's, with the first ball scheduled for 10:30 a.m. The young cricketers, aged 8 to 14, have spent the past few weeks preparing as part of the Department's Next Innings! Summer Day Camp. They have been coached by former Cup Match players Rodney "Picnic" Trott and Coolridge "Coolie" Durham, together with the camp's dedicated staff.

Each year, Mini Cup Match provides not only an exciting day of cricket but also a glimpse into the bright future of the sport in Bermuda. I also wish to express our sincere appreciation to CG Insurance for once again serving as sponsors and for their continued investment in developing our young cricketers.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage the public to fully embrace the spirit of Cup Match by attending the final Cup Match trials at both clubs on Saturday, 25th July, and remaining for the eagerly anticipated team selections later that evening.

I also encourage the public to support the future stars of our national game by attending the Colts Cup Match on Sunday, 26th July, at 11:00 a.m. at Somerset Cricket Club.

Like so many Bermudians, I look forward to attending the Cup Match trials, visiting families and friends as they prepare their campsites over the coming weeks, and enjoying the unique atmosphere that makes this time of year so special.

Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to participate in the longstanding pre-match tradition of greeting the players and officials before the first ball is bowled. It is a privilege to be part of a ceremony that marks the beginning of one of Bermuda's most cherished national traditions.

Cup Match is far more than a cricket match. It is a celebration of our history, our resilience, and our shared identity as Bermudians. It reminds us of the bonds that unite us through heritage, pride, and community. It is a time when families, friends, neighbours, and even strangers come together to create lasting memories and strengthen the connections that make Bermuda such a special place.

Mr. Speaker, as we celebrate this year's Cup Match holiday, let us also take time to reflect on its deeper meaning. These holidays commemorate the struggles and sacrifices of those who came before us and honour Bermuda's journey from enslavement to freedom. They remind us of the importance of unity, respect, resilience, and hope for future generations.

Cup Match is one of the few occasions that truly brings our entire island together. Whether your allegiance lies with Somerset or St.

George's, whether you are at the cricket, camping with family and friends, or simply enjoying the holiday, we are united in celebrating what it means to be Bermudian.

On behalf of the Ministry of Tourism & Transport, Culture & Sport, I wish both teams every success, congratulate everyone who has worked tirelessly to make this year's celebrations possible, and encourage all Bermudians to celebrate responsibly, support our young athletes, and enjoy a safe, memorable, and joyful Cup Match holiday.

Happy Cup Match to all! Thank you, **Mr. Speaker.**