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HOPE FOR THE HOMELESS
SOLES WITH SOUL



SEE ARTS SECTION C

NFL FOOTBALL
MIAMI DOLPHINS COACH FIRED



SEE SPORTS SECTION E

Govt 'interfering' in homes probe

Investigator says inspectors 'marginalised'

By AVA TURNQUEST
Tribune Staff Reporter
aturnquest@tribunemedia.net

EXCLUSIVE

POLICE recommended an independent audit of all ministry accounts, and a review of all line staff and contractors at the close of initial investigations into allegations of corruption at the Ministry of Housing, *The Tribune* has learned.

Former lead investigator Keith Bell yesterday urged the government to give a full account of the police investigation, and any further findings.

"There is obviously political interference and political influence going on with this administration. There is no question about it," Mr Bell said.

"I don't know of no case in the history of The Bahamas where it took a whole team of officers five years to investigate - not even Sir Harry Oakes' murder. I can't tell you about no case, they need

to give an account."

Mr Bell said he presented his investigation to former Minister of Housing Kenneth Russell, and turned over the file to the commissioner of police in 2007.

Mr Bell said: "I told Minister Russell right there and then, that if he has any tenacity he would conduct an independent audit of all of the accounts inside the Ministry of Housing and he would also review his entire line staff and all of the contractors.

"I told him that he would have to make a decision as to whether or not there was evidence substantively or otherwise and he would have to make a decision as to how we deal with the people within and outside of his ministry."

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NASSAU BEACH HOTEL DEMOLISHED



THE NASSAU Beach Hotel, in Cable Beach, is being demolished as part of the ongoing redevelopments in the west part of New Providence. Photo: Felipe Major/Tribune Staff

\$5M DEAL SIGNED TO UPGRADE ZNS TELEVISION TO HIGH DEFINITION

By SANCHESKA BROWN
Tribune Staff Reporter
sbrown@tribunemedia.net

OFFICIALS at the Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas signed contracts worth \$5 million yesterday to upgrade ZNS Television from an analog broadcasting system to high definition.

Kit Digital, a publicly traded digital integration compa-

ny, has been awarded a \$2.4 million contract to design, engineer and install ZNS' new digital television facility in New Providence.

An additional \$2.6 million will be used to purchase a mobile TV vehicle, upgrade ZNS facilities in Grand Bahama, carry out supplemental works necessary to accommodate the upgrade, and conduct staff training.

Minister Tommy Turnquest, who has oversight of public broadcasting, said ZNS will now be able to operate with digital television equipment to provide its national audience with video and audio quality in keeping with international industry standards.

"The digitalisation trans-

See page 3

CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST PREGNANT WOMAN

By LAMECH JOHNSON
ljohnson@tribunemedia.net

A PREGNANT woman was acquitted of a serious drug possession charge yesterday when one of two co-defendants pleaded guilty to the offence and admitted to owning the marijuana found in his car during a search.

The prosecution withdrew the charge against 29-year-old Deandre Gilbert who, with Michael Rox, 24, pleaded not guilty to possessing marijuana with intent to supply. Rox was also acquitted.

The two, with Jamal Maycock, 32, appeared before Deputy Chief Magistrate Carolita Bethell, at Court 8, Bank Lane.

It was alleged that on Sunday, December 11, around

See page 7

PRISONER SHOT IN ESCAPE BID

By SANCHESKA BROWN
Tribune Staff Reporter
sbrown@tribunemedia.net

A PRISON inmate was shot yesterday morning after managing to escape custody while at the hospital.

Dorion Ambrister, 28, escaped by jumping through a bathroom window at the Princess Margaret Hospital at about 5.40am.

Fox Hill press spokesman Sergeant D McKenzie said: "Ambrister was under 24-hour guard by a prison officer while at the hospital. He was allowed to use the restroom

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HOPE FOR MISSING MEN

By KHRISNA VIRGIL
kvirgil@tribunemedia.net

ROYAL Bahamas Defence Force officers believe there is a good chance a group of men who went missing at sea while on a fishing trip could still be alive.

Lieutenant Commander Nedly Martinborough said the four men's vessels were sighted off the coast of Cay Lobos not far from Cuba on Monday at 8pm.

The Mangrove Cay, Andros, residents were report-

See page 7

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LOCAL NEWS

Water loan deal

By CELESTE NIXON
Tribune Staff Reporter
cnixon@tribunemedia.net



ENVIRONMENT MINISTER Earl Deveaux

GOVERNMENT yesterday put forward a multi-million dollar loan resolution to facilitate much-needed overhauls and upgrades to water

and sewage infrastructure. Minister for the Environment Earl Deveaux opened the debate in parliament on the resolution to borrow \$81 million from the Inter-American Development Bank to provide for an enhanced water programme for the country.

He said there is an "urgent need to improve the infrastructure and put in place the necessary provisions for adequate levels of service."

"The approved \$81 million loan to the Bahamas government will permit us to measurably address these continuing challenges at WSC".

The overall goals of the water supply and sanitation systems upgrade is to improve the efficiency of service and quality of potable water, address immediate sanitation problems and facilitate the design and implementation of economic and environmental regulations for the production and delivery of potable water, Mr Deveaux said.

The majority of the loan will be directed at reducing the non-revenue water (\$49 million); rehabilitating sewer plant infrastructure and designing a master plan for waste water treatment (\$15.5 million), said Mr Deveaux.

A further \$5.5 million will be allocated for the institutional strengthening of the Water and Sewerage Corporation to improve staff productivity and customer service, he said.

Following this, Mr Deveaux said, the government intends to relinquish its regulatory role in water and sanitation, with future tariff increases falling under URCA's responsibility.

Additionally, \$3 million will be allocated for the establishment of a new independent environment regulator.

"In order for the water and sanitation sector to develop and function at the level that we all expect, an appropriate framework is required to administer economic and environmental regulation," said Mr Deveaux.

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LOCAL NEWS

\$5M DEAL SIGNED TO UPGRADE ZNS TELEVISION

from page one

formation of television will enhance ZNS' brand identity, provide a significant improvement in productivity, workflow and creativity, while also enhancing professionalism," he said.

"It is also anticipated that this digital upgrade will improve the quality of on-air presentations, reduce operational and maintenance costs and increase ZNS' capacity to produce quality local programmes. Bahamians everywhere should benefit from the improved digital television quality."

Mr Turnquest said particular attention will be paid to the training and development of the corporation's staff to enable them to take advantage of the new digital technology.

"This new upgrade not only satisfies the FNM's 2007 Manifesto commitment to transform ZNS into a 21st century multimedia corporation, but advances the governments objec-

tive of causing ZNS to become a producer of local programming, using the works of Bahamian writers, directors, artists, musicians, producers and technicians," he said.

The last upgrade of ZNS television equipment was in 1997. At that time, the government spent \$4 million.

Mr Turnquest admitted that for many years, ZNS spent twice as much as it earned, and was over staffed, millions of dollars in debt and unable to raise capital on its own.

Last year, in an effort to reduce costs, the Broadcasting Corporation laid off more than 80 employees.

Since then, Mr Turnquest said, the board at ZNS has been given a mandate to make the corporation more functional, more cost-effective and more accountable than it has ever been.

No longer will there be managers at ZNS with very few or no employees to manage, the minister said.



MINISTER Tommy Turnquest said the digitalisation will enhance ZNS.

POLICE RECEIVE PAY INCREMENTS

By DANA SMITH
dsmith@tribunemedia.net

TOP officials at the Royal Bahamas Police Staff Association confirmed yesterday that government-promised pay increments have been received by police staff.

Dwight Smith, executive chairman of the Police Staff Association, said: "All the increments were restored and persons have received it."

Earlier this year, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham announced civil servants at the maximum of their pay scales will receive a one-time lump-sum payment, equivalent to one increment.

In addition, two more increments will be added to every pay scale in the public service and every public officer will be entitled to an

increment in pay during the next fiscal year, and a further increment during the subsequent year.

"There are 500 persons within the police force," Mr Smith said. "I can say, without a shadow of a doubt, at the pay date of this month, those persons received the amount of monies that was allotted for them."

Mr Smith thanked the government for keeping their word and ensuring that "much of our officers have a good Christmas".

According to Mr Smith, around 500 police officers and staff received between \$400 and \$700 in increments, depending the length of service. On the table to be discussed in future are salary, a new medical plan, and a new pension plan.

POLICE CONFIRM TWO SOUGHT AFTER HIGH-SPEED CAR CHASE

By DANA SMITH
dsmith@tribunemedia.net

POLICE are searching for the two suspected armed robbers involved in Monday's high-speed car chase and gunfight on Eastern Road.

Yesterday, police confirmed that two men approached a woman in the Palmdale area around 11am, armed with handguns.

They robbed her of an undisclosed amount of cash and made off in her Nissan Sentra.

The woman immediately called police, and officers on mobile patrol spotted a vehicle matching the description of the stolen car

in the Montagu area, heading east.

The driver sped off when he saw the police and a high-speed chase ensued.

The car eventually crashed on San Souci Road after making a sharp turn.

The men emerged from the car with guns drawn, according to police, and engaged the officers in a gunfight which frightened those in nearby homes.

"I was in my house when I heard probably about four shots - it was like 'Pow pow pow pow'. I didn't know what it was at first but then I recognised that it was gunshots for sure," one woman said.

"My dogs started barking and, of course, I was scared. I stayed in my house."

Another neighbour told how he heard the loud car crash followed by "four rapid shots".

Both suspects managed to escape, but an Eastern Road resident insists one of them was shot during the gunfight and must seek medical attention soon.

The area was combed by police officers and canine units, but no sign of the men was found.

Anyone who has information concerning this incident or the suspects is urged to contact police immediately by calling 919 or 911.

Teenager cleared in murder trial

By LAMECH JOHNSON
ljohnson@tribunemedia.net

THE murder trial of an Abaco teenager came to an end yesterday afternoon when the jury declared him not guilty.

Raheem McBride, 19, of Murphy Town was acquitted of the murder of Arah Brown, who was stabbed on September 13, 2010 on Curry Lane, Murphy Town.

Initial reports indicated that the stabbing occurred after a fight broke out between the two.

During the trial, evidence presented to the court suggested that the fight had been initiated by Brown.

McBride claimed self-defence throughout the trial.

Prosecutor Linda Evans attempted to convince the jury that McBride had used excessive force in defending himself, based on the wide, four-inch deep wound to the abdomen of the deceased, which caused his bowels and intestines to be visible.

She told the jury during closing submissions that excessive force was enough to warrant the charge of murder.

Defence attorney V Alfred Gray emphasised that his client acted in self-defence

after being attacked by the deceased, who was armed with a piece of sharpened wood.

After Justice Vera Watkins reviewed the evidence, the jury deliberated for nearly four hours before delivering the 12-0 not guilty verdict.

Justice Watkins dismissed the jury and said to McBride: "The jury has returned a not guilty verdict, that means you are free to go."

McBride thanked Mr Gray for his services before leaving the court with his stepfather.

SIX MEN QUESTIONED OVER KILLING

By CELESTE NIXON
Tribune Staff Reporter
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A NUMBER of people are being questioned by police in connection with the most recent Family Island murder.

Superintendent Noel Curry, stationed on Abaco, confirmed yesterday evening that six men are currently in police custody and undergoing questioning regarding the fatal shooting of Claude Collins of Marsh Harbour last week.

According to police reports, Mr Collins was shot a number of times in the chest shortly before 8pm on Friday while

standing in front of a home in Sweeting's Village.

He was taken to a local clinic where he later succumbed to his injuries, police said.

However, residents claim Mr Collins died at the scene. Suspicious men were seen "scouting the area" earlier that day, one resident said, and had been seen in the area a week prior.

"(Collins) is known to have association with human trafficking, and that usually includes drug trafficking. It's a hit," said the resident.

He said Mr Collins "went outside to get a smoke, he sat

on the porch and someone shot him five to six times in the chest. The coroner said whoever shot him was making sure they killed him".

According to the resident, a boat was seen leaving the shore about 1,000 feet away from the scene shortly after the shooting.

While there are a number of people being interviewed by police, Supt Curry said he is not sure if charges will be brought.

He said: "I do not know if charges will be brought against them, police are working feverishly to resolve this matter."

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Fraudsters on the prowl for your money

"CHRISTMAS is coming and the goose is getting fat, please put a penny in the old man's hat; if you don't have a penny, a farthing will do, if you don't have a farthing, God bless you!"

Yes, Christmas is a-coming and the fraudsters are again on the prowl, but, unlike the poor old man who was satisfied with a paltry farthing — which in those ancient times could have probably bought him a cup of hot tea — today's beggars are really big time crooks on the prowl for the few generous hearts that are left amongst us to fill their greedy maws.

A few years ago, there was an outbreak of some of our prominent citizens being stranded in various parts of the world and sending cries for financial help to their friends at home to pay their hotel bills to enable them to return home. Of course, there was promise of reimbursement on their return to Nassau.

We recall receiving three such solicitations ostensibly from Bahamians within a period of two weeks about four years ago.

The text of the letters was almost identical — as if it were a form letter, signed by different Bahamians. We only knew the person whose name was used in the first letter. Although we recognised the names of the other two persons in the other two letters, we did not know them personally.

The first solicitation came from a young university student who we knew to be at the University of the West Indies. According to the letter, she had gone to London for some unknown reason, had her passport and money stolen, was in dire straights and needed immediate help to pay her expenses and get home. We located her at the university and confirmed that she was nowhere near London. The other two letters soon followed. Each letter started with the sentence: "I'm sorry I did not inform you about my trip to England..."

We were not the only ones to receive these letters. Embarrassed Bahamians

whose names were being used sent out disclaimers. As mysteriously as they started, the letters stopped ... until yesterday when we received the following:

"HELP ME

"I'm Sorry I did not inform you about my trip to England, I'm presently in England, UK, something extremely awful happened to me, I was robbed at gun point on my way to the Hotel by some Hoodlums and they made away with my Bag and other valuables. Presently my things are held down by the hotel management due to my inability to pay the hotel bills which I currently owe, they even had to restrict my access to the hotel facilities until outstanding bills are cleared and I don't have a dime on me again, I had to walk down to the city library in order to send you this email. I have spoken to the embassy here but they are not responding effectively to the matter.

I feel so devastated, now my passport and other belongings are been retained by the hotel management pending the time I pay my hotel bills. This is shameful, I need you to help me with a loan of 1,150 Pounds to pay my hotel bills and get my self home. I will reimburse you soon as I get back Home. I will appreciate whatever you can assist me with. Let me know whatever amount you can help me with. "Hopes on you.
Signed: —

So as not to embarrass the Bahamian whose name is being used, we have deleted it. The letter — with all its grammatical errors — is as we received it.

We have reprinted it here to warn anyone who might receive a similar letter not to fall for the bait.

Obviously, crooks are out to take advantage of the spirit of giving that is the theme of the Christmas season.

Whoever this thief is, he/she is certainly not a poor old man, who needs a penny dropped into his hat, or a stranded Bahamian anxious to get home.

A big risk for small businesses

EDITOR, The Tribune.

IN THE Bahamas today, and as it has been for many decades now, to operate a small business is almost a sure death knell for an entrepreneur. Now we should understand that this is not the situation in all cases, but in far too many. When it comes to concessions, the system in The Bahamas is set up in such a way that the foreign and big business owners are given approximately 99 per cent and small Bahamian owners 1 per cent or none at all.

There may be a number of individuals who may question the validity of this claim but one need only obtain a list of incentives offered to foreign and big businesses and a list (if one can be found) of those offered to small Bahamian businesses.

When we consider the fact that our reliance is heavily on foreign investors, then we can understand that it may be appropriate to offer some concessions. This is okay but what about Bahamian investors? The small struggling Bahamian business investor deserves incentives too.

Prior to 1967, we used to blame the white man for our misfortunes. We were made to believe that if the black man was in charge, opportunities and conditions for blacks in particular would improve.

In some areas, this has become a reality but when it comes to owning and operating a business, the ground is far from being level. The picture resembles more a mountain and a valley and you my friends can guess who is on the mountain top and who is down in the valley.

EDITOR, The Tribune.

THE Nassau Guardian reported as its headline on November 23, 2011, that NEMA can't account for 20 million relief dollars that came in during Hurricanes Jeanne and Frances. What is even more disturbing is that this incident took seven years to be publicized. Seven years.

The Director of NEMA at the time was Carl Smith. He is now the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security.

The former Prime Minister's statement on the missing \$20m was puzzling at best. The Nassau Guardian quoted the Rt Hon Perry Christie as saying that "he was not briefed on the matter and expressed surprise over the amount of money

LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

The significant difference in our society today from the pre-1967 era is that many of our black leaders of today are only interested in themselves and their families and friends.

Many of these individuals enter the halls of Parliament with a few thousand dollars to disclose and within five short years they emerge as millionaires. The small business-man is the least of their worries. They are too busy in many instances looking out for themselves.

Another interesting fact, which is indicative of the existence of double standards related to the small business operations is in the energy sector. Many large Bahamians as well as foreign businesses are allowed to go for months and months owing the corporation thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars.

On the other hand, when a small business is overdue just by one month, the Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) shows up, turns off the electrical supply. All businesses, no matter the nature, have over-heads and other related commitments.

However, it is all relative irrespective of the size.

The big business has over-head and personnel to pay, so does the small business.

For many years now, small businesses along with others have been required to pay for refuse (garbage) collection, no such compliance has been sought from the big businesses on Bay Street. The excuse is

that this is a high tourist-traffic area, well on an island that is only 147 square miles we should not allow one street to go without the required service(s).

One other area for our consideration is the current much complained about road-works. Many small businesses are feeling the full brunt of the road improvement project. Some of the issues are as follows:

1) Vehicles cannot gain access to many small enterprises;

2) Pedestrians refuse to patronise many small businesses due to ditches, muck and water they have to cross;

3) In some instances conditions are left for extended periods of time blocking the entrance to small businesses; and

4) In spite of the disadvantaged position of slow or no business (little or no monies) yet they are required to meet high utility and other bills.

With regards the double standard that exists when it comes to outstanding BEC bills, in the past it was reported that a number of our leaders failed to pay their bills for many months and even years.

Let us hope that they are all paid up, or this too can be added to the apparent double standard that hard working Bahamians have to contend with.

Remember small businesses contribute significantly to the Bahamian economy and they deserve more support, and less empty promises. It is indeed a big risk to own and or operate a small business in the present environment.

MICHAEL E TURNER

Nassau,
December 2, 2011.

Where is the money?

involved". He said that he presumes that a police investigation is going on.

The Tribune reported that some people have gone to court and that proceedings are continuing. In my opinion, this is unacceptable. The National Emergency Management Administration is a public entity and when funds are unaccounted for the public needs to be informed in detail as to what is going on and in a reasonable time period. Seven years in my view is not a reasonable time period. What is the Bahamas Information Services role in this? Aren't they mandated to issue press releases on government business?

\$20m is a lot of money. The apparent complicity in alleged illegal and/or unauthorised activities at the highest levels in government must cease. Is it a case of I can't prosecute you because my name might be called?

Our parliamentarians have yet to disclose their assets which are a requirement by law each year. Last year there was a big fuss over the constituency funding in which parliamentarians could not account for monies spent on their constituency. Good public policy mandates a paper trail.

Additionally, why haven't we heard from the Ministry of Education on the finalised audit report of the Loan Scholarship Programme? Back in August of this year, the dailies were reporting alleged improprieties with the accounting practices of certain employees. Millions of dollars have gone missing and/or are unaccounted for.

The public should be made aware of these findings. These items should not be kept for the privileged few sitting at the round table. Let me reiterate. All public matters should be publicly disclosed.

The Bahamas Mortgage Corporation is another government entity where public funds allegedly have been mishandled. The jury is still out on this, but I must give credit to the candid updates by Dr Duane Sands and his staff on the state of affairs at the corporation. I believe that his honesty thus far can serve as a model that government officials present and future can use to ensure that public activity is made public and that all improprieties in government entities are publicly disclosed.

A trend has developed in the Bahamas. Accountability seems to be a foreign word in some of our government ministries. As a citizen of this country, I just want what's best for Bahamians. The current economic climate that we are in does not allow us any room for error with the public purse. Tighter measures need to be enforced and those charged with this responsibility need to know that if they fail to carry out this mandate, they will face severe consequences.

Where is the money? I think all right thinking Bahamians would like to know.

DEHAVILLAND MOSS

Nassau,
December 7, 2011.

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D. Burrows-Haines (Mrs.)
Corporate Secretary

Dated this 14th December, 2011

LOCAL NEWS

POLICE TEST OUT NEW HELICOPTER



THE Police Force pilot tests out a helicopter the force is considering buying in order to help in the fight against crime.

Photo: **Felipe Major**/
Tribune Staff

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'FNM has mismanaged country'

By **KHRISNA VIRGIL**
kvirgil@tribunemedia.net

THE FNM administration has done nothing but mismanage the country and its economy, opposition MP Ryan Pinder claimed yesterday.

During the House of Assembly debate on 15 Bills aimed at reforming the financial sector, Mr Pinder said the government's actions have put the country's financial stability at risk for decades to come.

"Uncontrollable borrowing, the lack of fiscal responsibility and discipline on spending has resulted in negative outlooks and commentary about the financial and economic state of the Bahamas," he said.

"Under this FNM administration, the credit rating was downgraded more than once and we are at risk for another credit downgrade."

Mr Pinder went on to present parliamentarians with a timeline of the country's credit rating history. The recent downward trend is proof, he said, of the FNM's inability to manage the country's finances.

In December 2009, he said, Standard & Poor's (S&P), a leading credit rating agency,

"took an extraordinary position in downgrading the credit rating of the Bahamas on the grounds of increased spending and a narrow revenue base that has weakened the government's fiscal position," Mr Pinder said.

According to the Elizabeth MP, the government failed to heed S&P's warnings, causing further downgrading. He noted that in 2011, S&P made more observations concerning the Bahamas' economy.

"In the July 25, 2011 report, Standard & Poor's identified that one of the weaknesses of the Bahamas was a rise in fiscal debt and deficits that were generated during the recession," he said.

Mr Pinder said S&P asserted that the country's credit rating could improve if the agency saw reasons for optimism.

He said: "They do recognise that ratings could rise if the government takes a more proactive response to reduce the debt levels."

"I see no proactive, progressive policy from this government. In fact this government is all about debt, and more debt, and more debt, and more debt, without care or concern with how it will be

paid back. "Standard & Poor's observed that at the time of the report the deficit as a percentage of GDP was more than 65 per cent higher than the average for BBB rated countries."

Mr Pinder said this demonstrates the government's lack of a progressive policy to reduce the debt ratio.

Speaking later during the debate, Marco City MP Zhivargo Laing pointed out that government debt has risen, not just in the Bahamas, but around the world as the result of the largest international economic crisis in almost 80 years.

Producing charts that indicated upward trends in public debt in a number of countries, including the Bahamas, Mr Laing nevertheless assured parliament that the country is well placed to meet its debt servicing responsibilities, not just now, but also well into the future.



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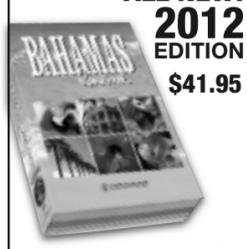
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D. Burrows-Haines (Mrs.)
Corporate Secretary

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LOCAL NEWS

Cabinet rules that led to firing

WELL, this is all very confusing, isn't it?

Just before an election the leader of the FNM gets into a nomination spat with a three-time successful candidate in one of the party's Grand Bahama strongholds.

The 58-year-old candidate

is a Cabinet minister, who has complained publicly about changes to the boundaries of his High Rock constituency, recently redrawn as East Grand Bahama. And in quick time, he is sacked from the Cabinet and starts behaving like Tennyson Wells – right before the election.

So what is this all about? Where does party business end and government business begin in this political squabble? And exactly why was Ken Russell fired?

Social media websites were deluged over the weekend with questions and opinions on these unusual developments. Most of those comments, and much newspaper coverage as well, focused on the nomination issue, and the supposed rift between "original" FNMs and so-called "Ingrahamites", who joined the party after 1990.

For example, Ivan Johnson in *The Punch* said the controversy revolved around Russell's "gross disrespect" of Ingraham over the nomination issue. And tensions were so high at a meeting in Grand



Bahama on Sunday, *The Punch* said, that a special security detail had to accompany the prime minister.

This was denied to me by individuals who attended the packed meeting in Freeport, and an online video of Ingraham's remarks showed no evidence of dissent or hostility amongst the exuberant crowd of FNM supporters, despite Ken Russell's obvious presence in the audience.

"The PM has enraged the Cecilite FNMs with his cold and harsh treatment" of Ken Russell, Kendal Wright and Verna Grant, *The Punch* wrote on Monday. Meanwhile, Russell had earlier told the *Freeport News* he did not know why he was fired. Branding Ingraham a "tyrant", he said he would seek to run in the next election anyway.

However, insiders say the sacking had little to do with Russell's attempt to hold onto the FNM nomination, or to any disagreement over the redrawing of constituency boundaries. He was fired because he publicly opposed a Cabinet decision.

Under our system of government, ministers must support in public the collective judgment of the government and their Cabinet colleagues. A minister who cannot support a major government policy is expected to resign. Or face dismissal by the prime minister.

This is clearly spelled out in *The Manual on Cabinet Procedure*: "A fundamental principle of Cabinet government is unity. It is important to present a united front to the public. If any minister feels conscientiously unable to support a decision taken by Cabinet, he has one course

open to him and that is to resign his office."

And in a telling comment to *The Tribune* by Maurice Moore – one of the original so-called "Cecilites" and the former parliamentary representative for High Rock – "Russell didn't handle the matter correctly."

In fact, the reason for Ken Russell's firing goes back to the waning months of the Christie administration, when the government received a proposal from an American company known as Beka Development. Beka reportedly wanted to acquire 64,000 acres in east Grand Bahama at a concessionary price of \$2,800 per acre.

According to Sir Arthur Foulkes, writing in *The Tribune* in March 2007, "Mr Christie and his colleagues in the PLP government must have taken leave of their senses even to entertain such a proposal. But it is obvious that preliminary talks have taken place and that Beka has been encouraged to proceed."

Since then, Beka has turned its attentions to the island of Eleuthera, where it is supposedly pursuing a multi-million-dollar project on privately owned pristine coastline at South Point. This project is opposed by environmentalists, and last summer Beka said its failure to advance the Grand Bahama project was also due to environmental issues, "and the fact that 80 per cent of the required land was government-owned".

Meanwhile, the original east Grand Bahama project seems to have morphed into something else. Last year, *The Tribune* reported that a mysterious company called "the

Cylin Group, whose principals include the daughter of the Chinese defence minister, was looking at a major tourism development on 2,000 acres of land in the Sharp Rock area".

This project was said to include hotels, a casino, a cruiseship terminal and a marina to be built by Chinese companies. Most of the land was said to be owned by the Grand Bahama Development Corp (Devco) and the Port Group. Devco is half owned by the Port Group and half by Hutchinson Whampoa, a Chinese company.

Insiders say that after the FNM took office in May 2007 the Grand Bahama Port Authority told government it had not agreed to transfer any land to Cylin, and subsequent inquiries as to where the money for the project was coming from were not favourable. "Nevertheless, the government gave the project the benefit of the doubt and allowed it to come before Cabinet, where it was voted down on four separate occasions."

In Ingraham's own words, "we would like to have any kind of project in Grand Bahama, but we also want to do things that we think make sense and not everybody who comes along and says we've got something is somebody who we could trust". He added that Russell promoted the project in public even though it had been rejected by the government four times.

On Monday, Russell admitted as much to *The Freeport News*. He said he was working with investors seeking to do a \$1.5 billion development on Grand Bahama. He acknowledged that the investors had applied to the Port Authority for land but their request had been turned down. Very little is known about this proposed project or the developers themselves.

The nomination issue is a separate matter, insiders say. This is apparently a case of

the FNM leadership trying to recruit fresh talent to revitalise the party ahead of an election. However, there are those who argue that the Cabinet rules issue was a pretext to get rid of Russell, an ineffective minister who was obstinately refusing to step down as a candidate despite an earlier undertaking to do so.

In this context, there is no doubt that the FNM leadership has the biggest say in deciding the slate of election candidates. According to the party's constitution, candidates are recommended by the executive committee (chaired by the party leader), after consultation with constituency associations. The recommendations are then ratified by the FNM council, which is also chaired by the party leader.

"I met with the High Rock, now East Grand Bahama, Constituency Association earlier this afternoon," Ingraham told the crowd in Freeport on Sunday, "and invited them to put forward the names of at least two candidates that you could consider to carry your party's flag for East Grand Bahama in the next election, and I expect to hear from them in short order."

He added that some sitting FNM members of parliament will resign of their own volition and others will be asked to make way for new candidates.

The subtext to all this is the future of the Grand Bahama Port Authority itself – a private franchise with enormous value for the country as a whole. Insiders say that the island's economic woes combined with the Port Authority's lack of direction creates a huge dilemma for the government, which does not want to be seen as intervening heavily-handedly in private enterprise, abrogating the Hawksbill Creek Agreement or pre-empting the courts.

SEE page 8

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LOCAL NEWS

from page one

8pm, the three were found by police in possession of 11lbs of Indian Hemp after their car was searched on Boyd Road, off Nassau Street.

The discovery and subsequent arrest of the three came as a result of Nassau Street police patrolling the area and pursuing a car that overtook others and ran a traffic light.

The drugs were found in two plastic packages under the driver's seat occupied by Maycock. Gilbert and Rox were passengers. When Deputy Chief Magistrate Bethell asked Maycock, who pleaded guilty, if he agreed with the facts read by the police prosecutor, he said: "Yes, ma'am." She then asked him his intentions for the dangerous drugs, which had been purchased from Exuma. "To smoke it," he replied.

CHARGES DROPPED AGAINST PREGNANT WOMAN

He denied he intended to supply the drugs.

The magistrate did not accept Maycock's guilty plea because of his admission that he did not intend to sell the drugs, only to smoke it.

He was being charged with possession with intent to supply instead of simple possession, she reasoned. However, after speaking with his defence attorney, Tecoyo Bridgewater, the Ragged Island man told Magistrate Bethell he did not understand the questions being put to him after the facts were read.

She questioned a third time his intentions for the 11lbs of marijuana and he replied: "To sell."

"Has anyone forced you to say this?" she asked the accused. "No ma'am," he replied. "Are you doing this of your

own free will?" she pressed. "Yes ma'am," he nodded.

She accepted the guilty plea and motioned for Mr Bridgewater to make his submissions to the court regarding his client.

The attorney asked the magistrate for leniency in giving his client the minimal sentence on the basis that "he came here and did not waste the court's time".

He also noted that his client, a father of three and an employee on the mailboat, had no previous convictions.

Deputy Chief Magistrate Bethell acknowledged the submissions and sentenced the accused to four years in Her Majesty's Prison, Fox Hill. Before sentencing, she expressed her disappointment that Maycock, already on trial for conspiracy and possession

of cocaine with intent to supply, would commit another offence.

She told him that his actions "caused two persons to be hauled before the courts".

The prosecution then withdrew charges against Gilbert and Rox. Mr Bridgewater informed the deputy chief magistrate his client wished to plead guilty to the similar charges for which he was currently on trial before her. She accepted and allowed the prosecution a brief moment to locate the docket concerning that trial.

Maycock was charged in February last year on three charges of drug possession with co-accused Samuel Knowles. On Friday, February 19, of that year, he was found in possession of 11lbs of marijuana, and charged with conspiring and

intending to supply it. He was also charged with possessing the same drug, though on a lesser amount of 10 grams.

Drug Enforcement Unit officers had arrested Maycock and Knowles, alias "Snake", in connection with that bust at Potter's Cay dock around 9.30pm.

The DEU had observed Maycock getting off the mailboat that had just docked, making his way over to a man standing by a car. Maycock handed the co-accused a brown box, which was taken by the co-accused and put in the car.

Officers then made the search and subsequent arrest when the marijuana was found in the box. A search in Maycock's cabin resulted in officers finding the 10g of the same drug. An interview with police revealed that

the drugs came from Black Point, Exuma, from a man nicknamed "Beef" who gave the box to the accused to give to a man nicknamed "Snake."

In court, Maycock admitted he knew the box contained drugs and admitted to purchasing the drugs.

After Mr Bridgewater made submissions, informing the magistrate that new law would not affect her discretion concerning the defendant who was charged before November 3, 2011, the Magistrate made her ruling.

Maycock received two years imprisonment for conspiracy and possession of the drug with intent to supply and six months for possession.

She, however, said his sentences were to run concurrently with the sentence concerning the latest conviction on drug possession for which he was sentenced to four years.

HOPE FOR MISSING MEN from page one

ed missing by relatives on Saturday at 11.20am.

Defence Force crews are continuing their active search for the two skiffs.

Meanwhile, Mr Martinborough said, "The next step is to contact the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make a connection with Cuba to be on the lookout for those vessels."

The RBDF has also been in contact with the family, police in Kemps Bay, Andros, and are also co-ordinating search efforts with Bahamas Air Sea Rescue Association (BASRA) and the US Coast Guard.

When the RBDF received word of the missing crew on Monday, Mr Martinborough said one vessel was dispatched almost immediately to begin the search for the men.

"We had other vessels at sea that we sent to search for the men as well," he said.

According to family members, Prince Jolly, Allan Wright, Roger Miller and another man known as KK were aboard the Tropic Explorer.

That vessel was left near the Fish Cays when the men boarded its two skiffs headed in a west southwest direction.

Mrs Rejane Jolley, Prince's mother, said she was doing all she could to remain positive as her son had never gone missing before.

"We hope they are together," she said. "They usually stay out for two to three weeks. This is (Prince's) third or fourth time out to sea, but (Wright and Miller) are more experienced. My husband is out there on the big boat looking for them. I'm just trying to stay positive."

GOVT 'INTERFERING' IN HOMES PROBE from page one

Mr Bell said he was only directed to investigate serious allegations of corruption and breaches of trust within the ministry concerning contractors and housing inspectors. During his debriefing with Mr Russell, Mr Bell said he was also questioned about a contingency fund.

"When I was doing the investigation and I spoke to some of the reporters at *The Tribune*, I learnt of (contingency fund) and I subsequently came into possession of documents about it and that is why I told the minister."

Mr Bell said: "I put him in the position that if he would wish to have it done, as the minister he could order that an independent audit be done of the account. That way he could have found out exactly what was going on or what's missing."

An investigation was initiated by former PLP Housing Minister Neville Wisdom in November 2006 as a result of claims made by contractors and inconsistencies in housing documents uncovered by *The Tribune*.

Mr Bell likened the investigation to "pulling teeth" due to the reluctance of claimants to provide information on record.

Mr Bell said he interviewed a number of contrac-

tors and housing inspectors over the course of his investigation. In his opinion, he said, housing inspectors were found to be marginalised. While their testimony provided him with a clear understanding of the allegations, Mr Bell said there was no evidence of any wrongdoing.

"After they realised it was the subject of a criminal investigation, which meant that persons would have been criminally prosecuted, they didn't want to be called as no witness. They didn't want to give their names and they didn't want no statements and that kind of thing - that was the issue."

Mr Bell said: "It appeared to me from what I saw that the inspectors were basically being marginalised - that was my conclusion quite honestly, and even if there were some wrongdoing there was no evidence whatsoever which implicated the inspectors in any sort of wrongdoing."

Mr Bell said he provided weekly updates on the investigation to the police commissioner, and continued to conduct interviews with potential informants after the FNM took office in 2007. Under the new government, Mr Bell was put in charge of police prosecutions.

Mr Bell said he could not confirm whether or not the investigation was furthered

but suspects that investigators were given other aspects to pursue. He also noted that the disconnect between the former Minister of Housing and the investigation into his own ministry begged a lot of questions concerning the FNM administration.

"All of this is purely political, because why is it that if they claim that they had done an investigation more than four years ago, and they had evidence to charge somebody, why didn't they charge the persons within that period of time?"

"Why they just coming now with elections right around the corner, that's a heap of nonsense and foolishness."

Mr Bell has since resigned from the Royal Bahamas Police Force, at the time of the investigation, he served as police superintendent. He is an attorney and serves as vice chairman of the Progressive Liberal Party.

Last night, Mr Bell confirmed that he has also offered himself up for candidacy in the next general election. However, he said the PLP party has not yet made a decision.

Mr Bell's comments follow yesterday's story in *The Tribune*, in which former Housing Minister Kenneth Russell said six more people were expected to face charges as a result of the police investigation.

PRISONER SHOT IN ESCAPE BID from page one

but used that opportunity to escape by jumping through a window despite being outfitted with leg restraints.

"He was caught a short time later around 6am by a prison officer who was forced to shoot him after the inmate confronted him with a blunt, wooden object.

"His injuries do not appear to be life threatening."

Armbrister, who was hospitalised on Monday for unknown reasons, was serving a 27-month sentence for stealing from a shop.

Despite reports from the prison that Armbrister was only free for 25 minutes before being caught, a source claims he was on the run for nearly four hours before finally being shot twice in the buttocks by prison officers on Dowdswell Street.

Armbrister is now back in the hospital under police guard. Superintendent of Prison Ellison Rahming refused to comment, other than to say an investigation in the matter is underway.

This incident is just one in a string of blunders by prison officers in recent times.

In October, the key to a cell block at Her Majesty's Prison went missing, raising questions about the accountability

of the facility.

According to sources inside the prison, a daily counting system is used to keep a record of all keys.

However, a key that opened "a few" cells went missing. This led to a partial prison lockdown while a search was conducted. The key was never found.

A press statement was later released that said measures are now being put in place to ensure the key would be rendered useless.

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CABINET RULES THAT LED TO FIRING

SEE page 6

But at the meeting on Sunday Ingraham put the GBPA on notice. "After the next election we will say to the Port Authority, this or that. And so it will be very much a question of Grand Bahama's future in the next general election, which will take place not long from now." It is not clear what he meant, and Ingraham declined to elaborate for me.

Meanwhile, the opposition PLP is said to be working assiduously behind the scenes to get disgruntled FNM's to run for the PLP or cross the floor and support a vote of no confidence in the government. This would presumably

force the prime minister to dissolve parliament, after which a general election must be held within 90 days.

If this does not happen the government can constitutionally continue in office until May 2 (the date of the 2007 election), when parliament must be dissolved and an election held within 90 days. So theoretically, the prime minister has until the end of July to hold elections, although most observers believe a February poll is more likely.

Of course, most observers believed a November election was in the cards too.

• What do you think? Send comments to larry@tribunemedia.net, or visit www.bahamapundit.com.

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Tribune Trivia

Yesterday's Question

What is the Japanese name for the instrument Reian Bennett will play at a concert on Boxing Day in Grand Bahama?

Yesterday's Answer

Shakuhachi

Yesterday's Winners

Donnalee Rolle	3pts
Eurydice Kemp	2pts
Derricka Lloyd	1pt

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- Create and execute launch plans
- Devise communications plan to include internal and external PR, advertising and promotions
- Manage the implementation and execution of marketing plans and supporting measures
- Timely and successful implementation of product initiatives, promotions and ensure consistent product documentation
- Manage product life cycle and management activities, including, pricing, positioning, sales channel management, sales support, promotions and performance
- Track and manage expenditures to marketing budget

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

DRUG RINGLEADER'S STATE ID MISTAKE

BRADENTON, Florida.
Associated Press

A FLORIDA woman who vanished two decades ago while facing prison time walked into a county office to request a state ID — in her own name.

Officials say 61-year-old Christine Dickinson was arrested earlier this month. A

Manatee County Tax Collector's clerk became suspicious when no record could be found that Dickinson ever possessed a Florida ID or driver's license.

The St Petersburg Times reports Dickinson was the suspected ringleader in a \$200 million drug operation. Officials say the group smuggled cocaine and marijuana from

Colombia and Jamaica.

The newspaper reports Dickinson's boyfriend was arrested years ago in France. Others served their time in prison and are now leading respectable lives.

Dickinson appeared in federal court in Tampa last week and is being held without bond on racketeering charges.

TWO KILLED, 64 HURT IN GRENADE ATTACK

LIEGE, Belgium
Associated Press

A MAN armed with hand grenades and guns opened fire in the crowded centre of a Belgian city on Tuesday, killing two people and wounding 64, an official said.

It was not immediately clear what motivated the attack in Liege city, but Interior Ministry official Peter Mertens said it did not involve terrorism. He said the assailant died, but did not say how that had happened. The daily La Meuse newspaper said the unidentified attacker killed himself.

Earlier media reports had said as many as three men had launched the midday attack, which left blood splattered across the cobblestone streets of a central square in Liege where people were doing Christmas shopping.

Footage from the scene



IN THIS image taken from video, a man lays injured in the moments immediately following a grenade attack in the city centre of Liege, Belgium, yesterday.

showed people, including a large group of children, fleeing down the streets of the city center — some still carrying shopping bags. Ambulances and police vehicles descended on the area in eastern Belgium.

As police helicopters and ambulances raced to the scene, the Belgian public broadcaster VRT reported that residents were ordered stay in their homes or seek shelter in shops or public buildings.

Another broadcaster, Radio Television Belge Francophone, said all buses had been asked to leave the city center and all shops in the area were closed, some with many customers stranded inside.

A medical post was set up in the courtyard of the palace of the Prince Bishops court house at the site. Emergency medical teams were called in from as far away as the Netherlands, Mertens said.

VRT Radio spoke with Herve Taveirne from the courthouse into which he had fled to escape the gunfire.

"We were in the courthouse building and were just leaving when we saw someone toss a grenade," Taveirne said. "I grabbed a little boy ... and took him back into the courthouse. Outside the building I heard shooting ... Our lives were in danger. This man was shooting in any direction. We ran for our lives at that point."

ONE DEAD, 15 MISSING IN LANDSLIDE

BOGOTA, Colombia
Associated Press

COLOMBIAN authorities say a landslide in a mountainous southwestern region has killed a child and left about 15 people missing.

Persistent heavy rains since September have wrought hav-

oc across the rugged South American nation.

Regional civil defense director Mario Fernando Orozco tells The Associated Press that the latest disaster buried three homes in the town of La Cruz in Narino state around sunset Monday.

He says the body of a child

age 7 or 8 has been recovered and that another 15 bodies are believed to still be buried in mud and debris.

Colombia's national disaster office says 145 people have died in the current rainy season, compared to 80 in last year's September-to-December rainy season.

RFH Email Auction



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THE COOLEST BAG ON THE COURSE ...
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The Ride for Hope Email Auction ends on December 16, 2011

To bid, send an email to info@rideforhopebahamas.com with the following information: Your full name, your telephone number, and your bid amount. By participating you accept RFH auction terms of use noted in full on our website. Updates (including current highest bid) will be posted at least twice daily at the following online locations: rideforhopebahamas.com | [facebook.com/RideforHope242](https://www.facebook.com/RideforHope242) | twitter.com/RideforHope

For more information please email us at INFO@RIDE FOR HOPEBAHAMAS.COM



CUSTOM CERVELO ROAD BIKE

BIKE VALUE: \$7329

BIKE STARTING BID: \$2500

BID INCREMENTS: \$100

BIKE SPECS: 56cm Cervelo frame & fork, SRAM 7 piece Red group set, Rotor crank set, Mavic wheels, Custom Ride for Hope paint by Hot Tubes, and Pika Packworks bike bag.

Special thanks to Toby Stanton of Hot Tubes Cycling for organizing and handling the logistics of the donation of the above equipment, and for painting and building this beautiful, one-of-a-kind bike. A huge thank you to each of the equipment manufacturers who generously donated the awesome components of this special bike.

SIGNATURE GOLF BAG

BAG VALUE: \$8000

BAG STARTING BID: \$1500

BID INCREMENTS: \$100

BAG SPECS: This is a one-of-a kind Tavistock Cup Team Albany golf bag signed by each of the members of the 2011 Albany Tavistock Cup Team: Ernie Els, Tiger Woods, Justin Rose, Ian Poulter, Trevor Immelman, Arjun Atwal.

A very special thank you to Albany Bahamas for this exciting donation.