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INSIGHT POLITICS AND THE ATLANTIS DEAL



SEE INSIGHT ON PAGE 12B

NFL PLAYOFFS GIANTS V PATRIOTS IN SUPERBOWL



SEE SPORTS SECTION E

Chinese worker killed in robbery

BUILDING DESTROYED IN BLAZE

By KHRISNA VIRGIL kvirgil@tribunemedia.net

INVESTIGATORS are trying to find the cause of a blaze which partially destroyed a two-storey building and injured an elderly man.

According to fire chief Walter Evans, the man, believed to be in his early 70s, was taken to hospital by neighbours, where he is in stable condition.

The blaze, said Mr Evans, was confined to one bedroom of the building in the Garden Hills area shortly before midnight on Sunday.

While the building received minor smoke and water damage, the room where the fire started will need extensive repairs, Mr Evans said.

Meanwhile, the cause of the house fire that killed a man and left two children aged 11 and 15 in hospital is still unknown to police.

Firefighters were alerted to the blaze at Heritage Drive off Baillou Hill Road shortly after 1am Tuesday.

When they arrived at the scene, they found a four-room single story wooden structure completely engulfed in flames.

See page 8

POLICE PLEA AS TEENAGE GIRL GOES MISSING

By KHRISNA VIRGIL kvirgil@tribunemedia.net

POLICE are asking for the public's help in finding a teenage girl who went missing four days ago.



Kendesha Mackey, 15, pictured, of Water Street, Big Pond, was last seen on Thursday in the Rupert Dean Lane area. She was wearing a white t-shirt and a black striped white pants with white slippers.

See page 8

New Year horror as man attacked outside his home

By SANCHEKA BROWN Tribune Staff Reporter sbrown@tribunemedia.net



A WORKER at a local Chinese restaurant chain was shot and killed in front of his home early yesterday morning.

Police say the victim, who is believed to be Raymond Han, 44, was shot in his left shoulder during an armed robbery outside his Village Road home.

He had just returned home after celebrating the Chinese New Year with family and friends when he was approached by a gunman around 3.30am.

The man robbed Mr Han of his Samsung cell phone before shooting him and fleeing the area in an unknown direction.

Mr Han was found slumped over the railing by his colleagues a short time later.

He was rushed to the hospital by his brother, but died a short time later.

The Tribune understands

POLICE have issued this artist's impression of the suspect in the murder of Raymond Han.

Mr Han was an employee of VIP Chinese restaurant, and is also related to one of the owners.

Officials at the Chinese Embassy said last night they are still waiting for local police to confirm whether or not the country's latest murder victim is "one of their own".

An embassy official said

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PM'S HOPES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY



PRIME MINISTER Hubert Ingraham addresses the opening of the Caribbean's biggest tourism trade show last night at Atlantis. Photo: Felipe Major/Tribune Staff

MORE than 1,500 delegates have convened at the Atlantis resort for the 30th anniversary of the Caribbean's biggest tourism trade show - Caribbean MarketPlace.

Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham expressed optimism for recovery and sustained growth of the industry at the conference's opening ceremony last night.

Noting the increase in arrivals, Mr Ingraham underscored the importance and impact of infrastructure upgrades and expansion during the "slowdown".

"Here in The Bahamas we

are focused upon ensuring our readiness for the inevitable global economic recovery as it occurs," Mr Ingraham said. "Our economy is therefore the beneficiary of the most comprehensive upgrade and expansion in our history."

Key investments and infrastructure developments noted include: the Nassau Straw Market; Lynden Pindling International Airport; the Airport Gateway; and the New Providence Road Improvement Project; the privatisation of the Bahamas Telecommunications Company; and the Baha Mar project.

Mr Ingraham said: "We

continue to see the investment in people and the continued building of relationships as the key to sustained growth. In The Bahamas, we have placed considerable emphasis on improving the visitor's experience through investing in Bahamians."

He added: "Two of the enduring programs of the Ministry of Tourism - the BahamaHost training programme for the tourism industry and the People-to-People cultural exchange program for visitors - have been tremendously improved."

See page 8

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5. Can my life insurance company deny a claim after I die?
6. What happens to my death benefits if my beneficiary is my "Estate"?
7. How will my death benefit be calculated?
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LOCAL NEWS



MINISTER of Finance Zhivargo Laing (left) and IDB Bahamas representative Astrid H Wynter exchange agreements following the signing of a \$612,000 technical co-operation grant from the Japan Special Fund. Pictured from left are Robert D L Sands, Honorary Consul-General of Japan, and Hiroshi Yamaguchi, Ambassador of Japan.

Photo: Kristaan Ingraham/BIS

Japanese contribute \$612,000 to Bahamas

BY GLADSTONE THURSTON
Bahamas Information Services

MINISTER of Finance Zhivargo Laing and Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) representative Astrid H Wynter have signed a \$612,000 technical co-operation grant to support strengthening The Bahamas' fiscal policy.

The resources were provided by the Japan Special Fund to the IDB. Japanese Ambassador to the Bahamas, Jamaica and Belize, Hiroshi Yamaguchi also signed the documents. The government's contribution to the project is \$153,000.

Minister Laing noted that as a general rule The Bahamas "has maintained a record of good economic performance having a high per capita income which is attributed to our sound management of the economy, our political stability, and our close proximity to the USA".

Over the past 20 years, he said, The Bahamas has had an average growth rate of about 1.3 per cent with a strong spurt that took place between 1993 and 1999.

The 2008/'09 recession "which led to the worse global economic and financial recession since the great depression, significantly and negatively affected our economy with a contraction of some 5.4 per cent in 2009 alone, a contraction which led to critical tax generating tax sectors of our economy being badly affected," said Mr Laing.

As an example, in 2009 the hotel room expenditure and imports of merchandise dropped by 21 per cent each, "and all of this would have significantly and negatively impacted our revenue collection.

"This negative impact on revenue combined with the fact that the government had to increase expenditure,"

said Mr Laing, "caused overall deficit to reach about 4.4 per cent of gross domestic product.

"Obviously to finance that deficit the government had to grow the public debt so that our debt to GDP ratio would stand around 48 per cent of GDP compared to 29 per cent where it stood just a few years ago."

The grant facility will support new and existing government programs that are designed to strengthen the framework of fiscal accountability, he said.

"The focus of this technical co-operation aims to support our charge towards fiscal rebalancing though improving our current system of revenue collection with particular emphasis on tax administration and also by strengthening our debt management systems.

"Ours is essentially to modernise and reform our systems so that they are consistent with international best practices," said Mr Laing.

Recently a debt management committee comprising the Central Bank of The Bahamas, the Treasury Department, and the Ministry of Finance was established expressly to look at debt management on a sustainable basis.

"According to our bi-lateral official development aid scheme," said Ambassador Yamaguchi, "The Bahamas is classified as a rich nation not eligible for receiving even technical assistance through Japan International Co-operation Agency.

"However, our embassy, in consultation with the IDB and our own government have worked very hard to materialise this grant project taking into consideration the unique economic structure of The Bahamas specialising in, among others, tourism maritime and finance.

"I sincerely hope that this project will strongly update the capability of the Bahamian government in strengthening and further developing its economy," Ambassador Yamaguchi said.

The Japan Special Fund, established in 1988, is one of the largest trust funds at the IDB, and supports the preparation and implementation of IDB projects, as well as stand-alone projects in line with the IDB's Country Strategy with each of the borrowing member countries.

The programme will improve the capacity of tax administration and debt management areas, IDB Project team leader Gerardo Reyes-Tagle said.

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LOCAL NEWS

Relocation of residents 'will not happen soon'

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

FREEPORT: The relocation of residents from the Pinder's Point/Lewis Yard area will not happen anytime soon, despite an initial assessment undertaken by the government in 2011.

Following constant complaints and concerns regarding emissions from the nearby industrial plants, the government sought to relocate the Lewis Yard Primary School and a number of residents from the area.

While in Grand Bahama last week, however, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham said Buckeye, the new owners of Vopak/Bahamas Oil Refining Company (BORCO), is not on board with the relocation plans.

"When Vopak was here, they had a plan to relocate a

number of persons and also the school.

"We undertook assessments in the neighbourhood and agreed in principle how we would go about acquiring the properties and how it would be paid for by Vopak providing the monies.

"Vopak has now sold to Buckeye; they do not have the same plan," Mr Ingraham said.

The problem of emissions has been an ongoing issue in the area for a number of years.

In the late 1980s, the Grand Bahama Catholic High School and the Hawksbill

Junior and Senior schools were all relocated from the area as a result of the constant emissions. In recent years, classes at the Lewis Yard Primary had been dismissed on a number of occasions when students and teachers fell ill because of the fumes.

In addition to the fumes, residents also complained of various health conditions, including respiratory problems, burning in the nostrils and eyes, nausea, and skin irritations.

During a visit to Grand Bahama in November 2010, Mr Ingraham had expressed

concern about the proximity of homes to the industrial plants and said it would be in the interest of public health and public safety if they were not there.

An assessment of the area was ordered with a view to relocating residents and the school.

While speaking with the media on Wednesday, the Prime Minister again reiterated his concern for residents.

"We do have concerns about the continuing complaints and emissions. We will continue to be engaged with Buckeye on the issue," Mr Ingraham said.

MAN'S DEATH IS THE SECOND GRAND BAHAMA MURDER OF YEAR

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

ary 19. Police later found his vehicle abandoned several miles away at Watkin's Lane, off Pioneer's Way.

FREEPORT - Grand Bahama Police have classified the death of 46-year-old Franklyn McIntosh as the island's second homicide for 2012.

So far, no arrests have been made and police are appealing to anyone with information that can assist them with their investigations in the case to come forward.

McIntosh's body was discovered on the roadside in the Kennedy Drive area in the early morning hours of Janu-

The body was taken to Rand Memorial Hospital morgue where an autopsy was performed to determine the cause of death.

Persons with information that can assist the police are asked to call 350-3107/8, 352-9774/5, or 911.

MAN QUIZZED OVER ROBBERY

By DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

FREEPORT: A 23-year-old man was taken into custody over the weekend for questioning in connection with an armed robbery, involving a stolen \$25,000 Nissan 300ZX sports car.

Asst Supt Loretta Mackey reported that sometime around 8pm on Friday, police received a call of an armed robbery in the Arden Forest area.

A 32-year-old resident of Arden Forest told police that two men wearing dark clothing and armed with handguns held him up outside his residence.

The man was robbed of his black 1990 Nissan 300 ZX car valued at \$25,000, money, and a cellular phone.

He told police the culprits fled in an eastern direction.

ASP Mackey said while police were conducting a search in the eastern area around 2.28am on Saturday they discovered a 23-year-old man with a .40 pistol, with 10 live rounds of ammunition.

The man was arrested and taken into custody.

Ms Mackey said police are calling on persons to us assist the police in locating a second suspect and the stolen 300ZX car, with licence plate number 45444.

Persons can contact police at 352-9774/5, or 350-3107/8 or 911.

GUN FOUND

A FIREARM was discovered in bushes in the South Bahama area on Saturday, police reported.

ASP Mackey said officers from the Mobile Patrol Division found a black XD 9mm pistol, along with a magazine, in bushes around 3pm.

22 ARRESTS

SOME 22 persons were arrested over the weekend, including a female minor.

The arrests were for various offences including house-breaking, stealing, forgery, armed robbery, unlicensed firearm, murder, gambling, and outstanding warrants of apprehension that were issued by the Magistrates' Courts.

The juvenile female was arrested for being 'uncontrollable'.

Ms Mackey said some persons are expected to be charged and arraigned early this week.

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UNDERWORLD	NEW	1:15	3:40	N/A	6:15	8:40	10:45
THE IRON LADY	C	1:10	3:35	N/A	6:10	8:30	10:50
RED TAILS	T	1:05	3:40	N/A	6:30	N/A	10:00
EXTREMELY LOUD AND INCREDIBLY CLOSE	T	1:00	4:00	N/A	7:00	N/A	10:00
CONTRABAND	T	1:10	3:30	N/A	6:05	8:25	10:45
THE GIRL WITH THE DRAGON TAT	B	1:00	4:30	N/A	8:30	N/A	N/A
JOYFUL NOISE	B	N/A	3:25	N/A	6:00	8:20	10:40
THE DEVIL INSIDE	C	1:15	3:40	N/A	6:15	8:40	10:50
MISSION IMPOSSIBLE	B	1:10	3:50	N/A	6:30	N/A	10:00
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RED TAILS	T	1:00	4:00	N/A	7:00	N/A	10:00
UNDERWORLD	NEW	1:10	3:40	N/A	6:10	8:35	10:50
CONTRABAND	C	1:05	4:30	N/A	6:10	8:25	10:40
JOYFUL NOISE	B	1:00	3:25	N/A	6:05	8:25	10:45
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Rights group says Iraq becoming 'police state'

IRAQ'S Shiite-led government cracked down harshly on dissidents during the past year of Arab Spring uprisings, turning the country into a "budding police state" as autocratic regimes crumbled elsewhere in the region, an international rights groups said Sunday.

Iraqi security forces routinely abuse protesters, harass journalists, torture detainees and intimidate activists, Human Rights Watch said in the Iraq chapter of its annual report.

"Iraq is quickly slipping back into authoritarianism," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director for the New York-based group. "Despite US government assurances that it helped create a stable democracy (in Iraq), the reality is that it left behind a budding police state."

Iraqi officials could not be immediately reached for comment.

Protests against Iraq's US-backed and democratically elected government erupted around the country in February 2011, partly inspired by demonstrations elsewhere in the Arab world.

While protests in other countries demanded the downfall of autocratic regimes, most of the demonstrations in Iraq pushed for improved services like reliable electricity and water, and an end to corruption.

The government clamped down, sometimes leading to bloodshed — 14 people were killed in clashes between security forces and civilians across the country during the Feb. 25 protests billed as the "Day of Rage".

A year later, with US troops withdrawn and Iraq's government mired in a political crisis, anti-government protests have all but died out. The few demonstrators who still gather in Baghdad's central Tahrir Square on Fridays are usually outnumbered by the security forces watching over them.

"Iraqis are quickly losing ground on the most basic of rights, including the right to free speech and assembly," said Samer Muscati, an Iraq researcher for the group. "Nowadays, every time someone attends a peaceful protest, they put themselves at risk of attack and abuse by security forces or their proxies."

Prison brutality, including torture in detention facilities, was a major problem throughout the year, the group's report said.

In February 2011, Human Rights Watch uncovered a secret detention centre controlled by elite forces who reported to the prime minister's military office.

The group claimed authorities trans-

ferred more than 280 detainees to the facility since the beginning of 2010 and charged detainees were tortured there with impunity. Government officials denied the facility's existence and alleged abuses.

Just days before the US military withdrew its last troops from the country last month, authorities rounded up hundreds of Iraqis suspected of having links to the deposed Baath Party, the group said in its report. It added that at least 600 of those detained in the sweep remain in custody without being charged.

Since the US withdrawal, Iraq has plunged into a worsening political crisis that pits the country's majority Shiites against the minority Sunnis.

The escalating political battle erupted after the government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, a Shiite, issued an arrest warrant against the Sunni vice president, Tareq al-Hashemi, on terrorism charges. Al-Hashemi denies the charges and has fled to the Kurdish autonomous region in northern Iraq, out of reach from Baghdad authorities.

Two other top Sunni officials were detained on terrorism charges earlier this week, prompting Ayad Allawi, the leader of the Sunni-backed Iraqiya bloc to accuse al-Maliki of unfairly targeting Sunni politicians and deliberately triggering a political crisis to cement his own grip on power.

Allawi, who is a Shiite, said on Wednesday that Iraq needs a new prime minister or new elections to prevent the country from disintegrating along sectarian lines.

An aide to Allawi told The Associated Press that 89 Iraqiya members have been detained in the past three months by security forces on terrorism-related charges. The aide spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the issue.

The political crisis has been coupled with a surge in violence that has killed more than 160 people since the beginning of the year.

On Sunday, gunmen attacked a checkpoint near Baqouba, a former al-Qaida stronghold north of Baghdad, killing three members of the security forces, police officials in Diyala province said.

The officials said that two of the dead were members of the pro-government Sunni militia known as the Awakening Council. Hospital staff in Baqouba confirmed the death toll.

All officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media.

This article is by Barbara Surk, of the Associated Press

Governance with more vision needed

EDITOR, The Tribune.

IN the King James Version of the Bible, Matthew 15 v 14 states, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a ditch."

This biblical verse, even though simple, is very profound and can be applied to our everyday lives. It can also be applied to the governance of the Bahamas.

The Hon Irvin Knowles, former Minister of Agriculture, spoke about farming sustaining the Bahamas almost 30 years ago. 30 years later, we are even worse off than before. It is as many Bahamians say, business as usual.

In a country still living on the model laid out by the late Sir Stafford Sands, we are still struggling economically and we are still relying too heavily on tourism.

The sweet talk of diversification provided and continues to provide deceptive sound bytes. But are we as a people serious about diversification?

When is someone with the gumption going to take the bull by the horns and make radical changes to our economy so that we can seek ways to get out of the ditch that we presently find ourselves?

Last year's budget that was read in parliament speaks to the continued will of the government not to diversify our economy and the Bahamian people continue to suffer from a lack of proper vision from its leaders.

How is it that by the stroke of a pen, the government can again wipe out the Bahamian poultry industry and cripple the fruit and vegetable industries?

How is it that our youth continue to suffer from the lack of a proper education?

How is it that the average Bahamian is still not getting a viable piece of the economic pie?

You see Bahamians, the budget is a blueprint for where we intend on going as a nation.

I submit that as a country we have been in the ditch for decades now. If you dug your self in a hole, what would be

Will sinking hurt out cruise business?

EDITOR, The Tribune.

COULD the sinking of the Costa Line cruise ship off

LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

the smart thing to do? The answer would be to stop digging. Our fiscal policy is disastrous at best. With the national debt soon to reach five billion dollars, that puts the debt for each Bahamian at \$14,285.00. This assumes a population of 350,000 Bahamians.

The department of statistics is now even using a different scale when calculating the national debt. Mr James Smith, former Minister of State for Finance, was surprised at the department of statistics for this action and he is worried about our current fiscal course.

I applaud the government though for the introduction of the job readiness programme and the jump starter programme that is helping willing and qualified Bahamians. I also applaud the government for its reintroduction of government subsidies to private schools. The cuts introduced in 2010 had a domino effect because private schools had to increase their fees. This has led to a decrease in private school students and an increase in the enrolment of an already overpopulated government school system.

Farming, biodiesel manufacturing, solar energy, LNG, the proper promotion of Bahamian culture and e-commerce are all industries waiting to boom in the Bahamas. The only obstacle is government policy or the lack thereof.

The January 11, 2012 edition of *The Tribune* reported that the US Senate has approved the Florida casinos bill. Once these casinos are built in Florida, these will be in direct competition with Atlantis and BahaMar. Must we wait until we are literally forced to diversify our economy? We must invest now in other sustainable industries.

The Bahamian people have to share part of the blame in this poor and outdated governance as well because we have repeatedly put our confidence in leaders whose vision are outdated and built for the 20th century.

Our interest is to only get a government job or a government contract. We must become more informed and demand more from our leaders. We need to generate more Bahamian employers rather than Bahamian employees.

Now we are reaping the harvest from years of improper governance. We are reaping the harvest from years of mis-education, poor administration of the court systems, poor collection of government revenue and the poor confidence placed in Bahamian professional talent when it comes to consultancy services and professional management services.

Can a change occur tomorrow? Of course not. But we must elect leaders who have the will to make the changes required. No slick talking and no short term promises will help the Bahamas. We need to set policies on a number of issues and drive them home irrespective of who is in government or which elite family will be affected.

We need governance that will place our best resources in key positions, irrespective of their political persuasion. We need governance that will desist from this culture of promoting friends, family and lovers. We need governance that will devise a concise immigration policy and put it into action. We need governance that will set fiscal policy that will not cause us to borrow more than we are collecting in revenue.

If our current borrowing trends continue, at some point we will become insolvent. We need governance that will initiate effective educational programmes that will focus on Bahamian culture, new industries and will challenge our children to be more creative.

We need governance that will give justice to all Bahamians irrespective of their societal status. We need governance that will put Bahamians first in their own country. Let me reiterate. "If the blind leads the blind, they both will fall in a ditch."

DEHAVILLAND MOSS
Nassau,
January 13, 2012.

Italy seriously damage our cruise business?

There is a connection when such accidents occur especially on a cruise ship that is "state-of-the art" and only six years old.

If the reports resulting from this are half accurate I am reasonably sure many cruise takers could change their minds as what happened on this Costa Line cruise ship clearly indicates some latent problems.

- Did you see how quick the ship almost sank?
- Foreign crews seem to be a serious problem...in emergencies passengers just have clear precise instructions how to evacuate. Aggrieved further with passengers from different nations worsens this.

Seeing that we rely on the thousands of cruise visitors has anyone thought what if a similar disaster was to occur outside of Nassau Harbour or off one of the private islands the cruise lines lease? Are we capable of organising an immediate emergency response?

Let me answer that...possibly if the ship is tied to Prince George Wharf.

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Three bars shut down, 28 arrested in police blitz

By **SANCHESKA BROWN**
Tribune Staff Reporter
sbrown@tribunemedia.net

POLICE conducted two separate operations over the weekend which resulted in three local bars being shut down and 28 persons being arrested.

Officers from the Southeastern and Central Divisions conducted the operations on Friday, in keeping with the Commissioner of Police Ellison Greenslade's policing plan for 2012 - "To Tackle Crime and Enforce the Rules of the Road".

The first was conducted by officers of the Southeastern Division between 7.15am and 9.25am at East Street South.

It resulted in 18 drivers being ticketed for traffic infractions such as unlicensed and uninspected vehicles, cracked windshields and tinted windows.

A 43-year-old man was also arrested for immigration purposes.

Officers of the Central Division conducted the second operation - "Operation Crackdown" between 4pm and 11.30pm at West Bay and Cumberland streets and East

Bay and Mackey streets.

As a result, 161 drivers were cited for various traffic offences, three local bars were closed for being in breach of the Liquor License Act and 14 persons were arrested.

Twelve people were also arrested on outstanding criminal warrants and two people for possession of dangerous drugs.

Police are encouraging the public to ensure their vehicles are in roadworthy condition and in compliance with the Road Traffic Act.

Police say drivers who fail to comply will find themselves before the courts.

Bus driver, 36, in hospital after shooting incident

POLICE are investigating a shooting incident which has left a 36-year-old bus driver in hospital.

The incident occurred around 5am on Saturday.

Police say the victim was entering his bus when he was approached by a man armed with a handgun who demanded cash.

An argument ensued which resulted in the driver, of Bishop Way, off Windsor Place, being shot to the abdomen.

The victim was taken to hospital where he is detained in stable condition.

Anyone with information on this incident is asked to contact police on 919, the Central Detective Unit on 502-9991 or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 328-TIPS.

FIREARM ARREST

A 23-YEAR-OLD man is in police custody after he was found in possession of an imitation firearm.

Officers of the Internal

TWO TEENAGERS HURT IN STABBING

POLICE are investigating a stabbing incident which left two teenagers in hospital.

The incident occurred shortly before 3am yesterday at a club in the Independ-

Security Division (ISD) were on patrol on Fowler Street, at around 8.50pm on Saturday, when they arrested the resident of Nassau Village.

SHOTGUN FOUND

A SHOTGUN, a laptop computer, an I-Pad, cell phones and watches were confiscated by police after they were discovered in an abandoned building.

At about 4.30pm on Friday, officers of the Central Intelligence Bureau, acting on information, proceeded to the building off Faith Avenue where they uncovered the items.

Police investigations continue.

dence Shopping Centre.

The victims, aged 18 and 16, were taken to hospital by ambulance where they are listed in serious condition.

DRUGS CHARGE

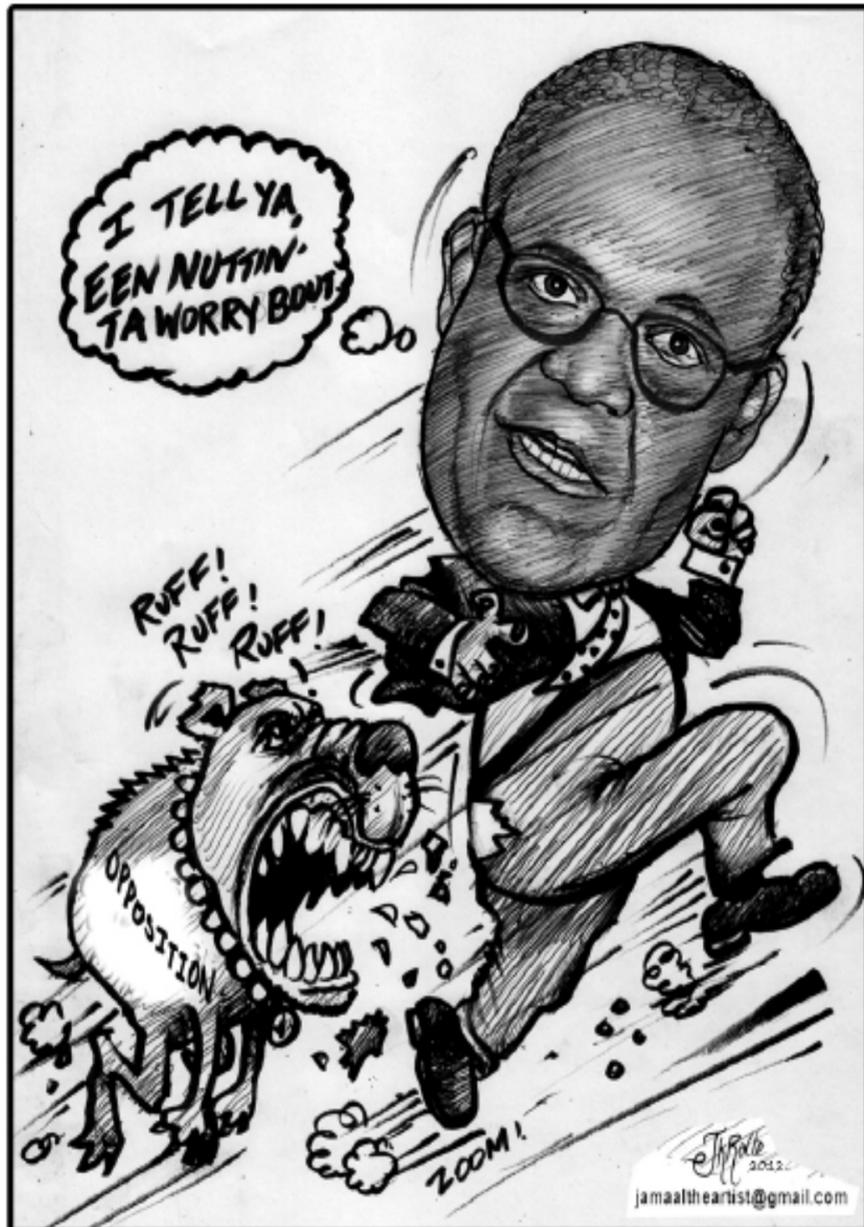
A 28-YEAR-OLD man of Mason's Addition is in police custody after he was found in possession of a quantity of suspected marijuana.

Officers arrested the man at about 5.30pm on Friday at Burial Ground corner after he was found in possession of a quantity of suspected marijuana along and cash, believed to be from the proceeds of drugs.

TROPICAL EXTERMINATORS FOR PEST PROBLEMS PHONE: 322-2157



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LOCAL NEWS

DNA chairman calls for worker involvement in Atlantis talks

DNA CHAIRMAN
Mark Humes said the Atlantis fiasco shows that, more than ever, there is a need for unions to be consulted and have representation in any deal between foreign companies looking to employ Bahamian workers.



By AVA TURNQUEST
Tribune Staff Reporter
aturnquest@tribunemedia.net

DEMOCRATIC National Alliance chairman Mark Humes yesterday said that labour representation should be an integral part of future Heads of Agreement negotiations in the aftermath of the failed Atlantis deal.

Mr Humes called for greater partnership between the government and unions as, the "turmoil" between the resort and its creditors has "jeopardized the future employment of a large number of Bahamian workers".

"It is time for any government seeking to represent the Bahamian people to see workers of this country and the leaders elected to represent worker's interest as partners and not adversaries," Mr Humes said.

"These government officials who, one day a common man and the next day a so-called expert, go about making decisions for our nation's

workers, tie them up to these foreign entities in almost slave-like fashion, and then when their deals go sour, they argue among themselves as to who was most incompetent, while these same Union leaders are left fighting and fending for their workers' lives. This has to stop."

Mr Humes added: "This Atlantis fiasco, more so than ever, shows that there is a need for the Unions to be thoroughly consulted and/or have representation in any negotiation that takes place between foreign companies looking to employ Bahamian

workers on a large scale."

Last week, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham reassured Bahamians that the failed deal between Atlantis and Brookfield Asset Management will have no adverse affect on jobs.

Mr Ingraham also maintained there is nothing the government of the Bahamas can do if Atlantis has defaulted on its loans. However, he insisted that the creditors of the property are seeking to keep it running and profitable.

In a press statement sent yesterday, Mr Humes said Bahamian workers cannot trust Mr Ingraham's assurances.

"Now that the deal he said would have safeguarded the workers' jobs was pulled from under the workers' feet, Mr Ingraham should be careful to make another round of promises, as this embarrassing debacle should be a reminder to him that it is important to be forthcoming with Bahamians in general," Mr Humes said.

He added: "He has no crystal ball, and despite many thinking that he is a god, he does not know or hold the future. He could not protect nor safeguard the jobs of

workers at Our Lucaya or the Royal Oasis; he could not protect nor safeguard the jobs of workers with Hutchison Whampoa; nor workers at Batelco, First Caribbean, or the Road Improvement Project. As it stands, Mr. Ingraham cannot even guarantee that he will be Prime Minister past May of 2012."

Mr Humes is also the DNA's candidate for the Fort Charlotte and a former spokesman for the Union of Tertiary Educators of the Bahamas (UTEB).

If elected as the new government, Mr Humes said the party will: honour the tripartite Agreement; inclusion of unions in the training and/or orientation of Public Service employees; facilitate the delivery of training and upgrading for workers at the College of the Bahamas, BTVI and the Labour College; appoint promotions boards with union representation to consider promotion for workers in their bargaining units; and invite leaders of unions to have observer status at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meetings and other international meetings where the decisions and outcomes impact on workers' rights.

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RBC Royal Bank

Montreal road named after cancer centre chief

ON January 17, nearly 300 people gathered at a celebratory farewell reception in Montreal to pay tribute to and thank Dr Arthur T Porter for his accomplishments as the former director general and chief executive officer of the McGill University Health Centre.

Dr Porter, who is also director of the Cancer Centre Bahamas, was recognised by chairman of the MUHC board of directors Senator W David Angus, who welcomed a number of dignitaries, including four ministers from the Quebec government; academic, scientific and business leaders; and pillars of the Montreal community.

The senator expressed his satisfaction at being able to thank Dr Porter for, among other achievements, driving the MUHC's multi-billion-dollar redevelopment project to the state where the institution's dream of world-class healthcare facilities at the

Glen Site has become an inspiring reality.

Dr Yves Bolduc, the Quebec government's current minister of health and social services; David Culver, the distinguished Canadian businessman and former MUHC board chairman; Professor Heather Munroe-Blum, the highly-regarded principal and vice-chancellor of McGill University; and John A Rae, an esteemed senior executive and chairman of the MUHC's the Best Care for Life capital campaign, then praised Porter for his leadership and invaluable contributions to the academic health centre, to Montreal and to the broader healthcare and scientific environment.

Mr Angus highlighted how Dr Porter arrived in Montreal in 2004 and quickly set about transforming the negative into positive, filling the organisation with hope and excitement.

He said Dr Porter was decisive, determined, refused to take no for an answer and moved boldly forward with a goal-oriented approach.

Mr Angus also announced that on December 5, 2011, the MUHC board of directors, with the full support of the fundraising team and key constituencies of the institution, had decided to designate the road on the Glen Site running along the plaza from Décarie Boulevard to the railway road, Chemin Arthur T Porter (Arthur T Porter Way).



DR ARTHUR T PORTER, who has had a road in Canada named



Commodore Roderick Bowe inspecting the Colour Guard at a recent Commander Defence Force Division.

CEREMONY TO MARK RBDF PROMOTIONS

BY MICHELLE GREENE

NEARLY 300 officers and marines have been promoted in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

Under the Command of Commodore Roderick Bowe, 248 promotions and advancements were approved by the Minister of National Security Tommy Turnquest.

Heading the list of Senior Officers are Lieutenant Commanders Michael Sweeting, Nedley Martinborough and Loren Klein who were all promoted to the rank of commander. Promotions for the rank of Lieutenant commander were given to Senior Lieutenants Raymond King, Chappell Whyms, Renhault

Darville, Henry Daxon, Frederick Brown and Whitfield Neely.

Twenty-one Junior officers were also promoted.

The seven (seven) Chief Petty Officers who advanced to Warrent Officers are: Lorenzo Williams, Drexter Green, Mario Bain, Gary Mackey, Dereck Christie, Lloyd Ferguson and Craig

Frazier. Advancements also included 68 Senior Rates and 143 Junior Rates.

The Commander Defence Force extends heartfelt congratulations to the Officers and Marines for their continued hard work and dedication to the Force, and gratitude to the Minister of National Security for his support.



AN AERIAL view of the parade ground at Coral Harbour Base during a ceremonial parade.

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LOCAL NEWS

PM'S HOPES FOR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

from page one

The Caribbean Marketplace conference is the premier marketing event of the Caribbean hospitality industry, matching buyers and suppliers through a computerized program of appointments.

The country last hosted in the conference in 2008, and organizers have noted its success as part of the reason the conference, marking its 30th anniversary, has been brought back to this nation.

The year also marks the 60th anniversary of the Bahamas Hotel Association and the 50th anniversary of the Caribbean Hotel and

Tourism Association.

Mr Ingraham said: "At this year's Marketplace, I am advised that you expect one of the best turnouts ever of buyers and sellers. This includes some 679 representatives of 'supplier' companies: hotels, attractions, destination management companies, tourism groups and transportation companies.

"It also includes 331 individuals representing buyers: with operators, wholesalers and online intermediaries," he added.

Some 41 international journalists from the Caribbean, the US, Latin America and Europe are expected to be at

from page one

However, police spokesman Stephen Dean said they do know that Kendesha is alive and still in the country.

He said: "While we have not found her, we have gotten reports that different people have spotted her in different places around town."

Kendesha is 5'4" tall, with a medium brown complexion and is slim.

Supt Dean added that police could not say at this time if Kendesha is just another runaway girl.

In November, police chiefs expressed concern about the "disturbing trend" of teenage girls being report-

POLICE PLEA AS TEENAGE GIRL GOES MISSING

ed missing only to find them in the company of adult men.

At the time, Supt Dean revealed that police were receiving missing persons reports for teenage girls "almost every week", and the task of investigating them was placing a strain on their resources.

"We have noticed this disturbing trend where we are receiving reports of a number of young teenage girls in particular being reported missing," Supt Dean said. "And when we conduct our investigation we find out, they're not as reported."

He explained that quite often, the girls are merely runaways who are eventually

found with their adult boyfriends.

"We are noticing that there are a number of girls who do not want to be under their parents' home, who do not want to be under the discipline of that home. In some cases they are moving out and they are moving out with young men," Supt Dean said.

This in itself is a matter of "serious concern" to police officers, as the girls could be placing themselves in dangerous situations, he said.

"We want to put the warning out, particularly to these young girls. They are putting themselves in harm's way," Supt Dean said. "A number of things can happen: they can be murdered, used as prosti-

tutes, abducted, sexually abused. We are very concerned about this."

A warning was also sent out to the adult men who date and live with underage girls.

"We are finding out most of these girls are getting involved in sexual activities with adult men," Supt Dean said.

"We're saying to the young men out there who are luring these girls from their parent's home - it is a criminal offence to have unlawful sexual intercourse with young teenage girls."

Anyone with information is asked to contact police at 919, 322-3333, the Southern Division at 322-3337 or Crime Stoppers at 328-TIPS.



THE BRIDGE AUTHORITY

~ NOTICE ~

Paradise Island Employers & Employees, Paradise Island Residents, Transportation Companies and the General Public are hereby notified that The Bridge Authority has commenced renovations to its Toll Plaza office. These renovations have resulted in the relocation of the Transponder office to One Marina Drive, Paradise Island, next door to Royal Bank of Canada. Office hours are 8:00am - 3:45pm. The telephone numbers remain 363-5569 or 363-5554 extension 27.

These renovations are expected to continue for the duration of 2012 and WILL NOT hamper traffic travelling over the bridge.

The Bridge Authority apologizes for any inconvenience caused, and assures its customers and stakeholders, that all efforts will be made to maintain safe and easy access to Paradise Island.

Billy Scavella
General Manager
The Bridge Authority

Chinese worker killed

from page one

police still have not told them if the victim was a Chinese national, as he was allegedly found in possession of a British passport.

He said: "We are waiting to see his passport, we were told that it maybe British so at this point we do not know if he is Chinese.

"If it turns out that he is a Chinese national, then we will require the authorities to find the murderer or murderers and bring them to justice. It is the Embassy's obligation as a part of its Consular protection and services. It's a universal practice and if he is one of ours we will ensure the

proper channels are taken."

Last night, police released a composite sketch of the man they want to question in connection with his murder.

Police say the suspect is believed to be in his mid-20s and is described as having a medium brown complexion, is of slim build and is 6ft tall.

Anyone with information as to the identity or the whereabouts of this man, or any information about this homicide, is asked to contact police @ 919, the Central Detective Unit at 502-9991 or Crime Stoppers anonymously at 328-TIPS.

Meanwhile, Grand Bahama police have classified the death of 46-year-old Franklyn McIntosh as the island's sec-

ond homicide for 2012.

So far, no arrests have been made and police are appealing to anyone with information that can assist them with their investigations in the case.

Mr McIntosh's body was discovered on the roadside in the Kennedy Drive area in the early morning hours of January 19.

Police later found his vehicle abandoned several miles away at Watkin's Lane, off Pioneer's Way.

The body was taken to Rand Memorial Hospital mortuary where an autopsy was performed to determine the cause of death.

The country's murder count now stands at seven for the first 22 days of the year.

BUILDING DESTROYED IN BLAZE

from page one

Firefighters were able to extinguish the blaze and rescue the two children inside, however, the home and its contents were completely destroyed.

The 15-year-old boy suffered severe burns to eight per cent of his body, including his hand, neck and face, and

the 11-year-old girl is recovering from smoke inhalation. They both remain in hospital.

Firefighters discovered a body burnt beyond recognition. A third person believed to be a relative of the children is still unaccounted for.

Mr Evans said police are unsure if the burnt body is that of the missing man.

"We are not sure at this

time. Our investigations are still continuing. We are also trying to determine the cause of the blaze. This will prove slightly difficult as the home was burned to the ground, however, we have ways to determine what started it."

Police have not yet released the identity of the body but *The Tribune* understands he is 36-year-old Rebiro Colebrooke.

January Is Cervical Cancer Awareness Month

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Director of Radiation Oncology &
CEO of McGill University Health Centre



Professor Dr. Karol Sikora
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Advertisement for the position of
Community Outreach Coordinator

The Government of The Bahamas has received financing under the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) to manage HIV/AIDS Strategic Information, Laboratory Testing and Prevention Programs.

The Ministry of Health invites application to fill the position of Community Outreach Coordinator

POSTS FOR IMMEDIATE HIRING

COMMUNITY OUTREACH COORDINATOR

General Function

Develop and launch A Community Outreach Unit with activities and programs emphasizing HIV education and HIV prevention in New Providence and several Family Islands. Provide ongoing interactions between outreach workers and clients that motivate behavioral change among most at risk populations. Strengthen Contact Tracing/Partner notification of HIV/STI/TB services. The incumbent will report on the related output indicators in the work plan and will be required to work independently, function as a supervisor, and project leader.

Educational and Experiential Criteria

- A Masters Level Degree or Higher in field related to Programme Coordination
- At least 4 years of experience in Programme Management/Coordination position
- Knowledgeable on HIV/AIDS and particularly the challenges faced by Special Populations
- Knowledgeable on human resource and budget management practices and procedures

Salary will be commensurate with degree and experience and includes standard project benefits. Interested persons are invited to submit a cover letter and current curriculum vitae in Word or PDF format to paulabowleg@bahamas.gov.bs. Applications must be received by 5pm on Friday, January 27th, 2012.

LOCAL NEWS

BY MIKE LIGHTBOURN

START MOVING YESTERDAY

LET'S say you've just decided to list your home for sale. You know there's a lot to plan, but when do you start preparing to move? The sooner, the better!

The main aspect guiding your planning will be whether you're moving locally, to another island or abroad. Either way, begin hoarding boxes, packing tape, moving blankets, packing peanuts – and big black markers to indi-

cate contents and locations on every single box.

In many cases, you may want to consider a professional mover, and your BREA listing agent can make recommendations. However, be sure the person or company you choose is reputable and that the mover has the proper comp insurance.

Always get an estimate in

writing and inquire about their equipment and experience, if they are not known to you. In such a small community we generally can get recommendations from friends.

Well in advance of The Big Day, hold a yard sale to reduce the amount you have to pay for your move. Items that don't sell can often be donated to charitable organ-

isations, or taken to the dump as a last resort.

When you're finally "outta there," make sure you've brought any medications and supplements you may need, and your children's favourite

toys, games and entertainment.

Like the aftermath of a hurricane, it could be a few days before you have access to your belongings, so plan ahead and be prepared!

Mike Lightbourn is president of Coldwell Banker Lightbourn Realty.



ROYAL BAHAMAS POLICE FORCE NATIONAL CRIME PREVENTION OFFICE

Advice when faced with armed robbers

By Constable 3011 MAKELE PINDER

ARMED robbery is one of the most serious and potentially dangerous crimes committed today.

A robber commits a hold-up because he or she believes that their profit will be worth the risk.

By decreasing the possible profit and increasing the risk of apprehension, potential businesses can reduce their chance of becoming a target.

Businesspersons must face the possibility of robbery on their premises realistically, and they should make security training a high priority.

You can avoid becoming a victim of such crime by adopting the following crime prevention measures provided by the Royal Bahamas Police Force National Crime Prevention Office:

- Place a surveillance camera behind the cash register facing the front counter.
- Install an emergency (panic) alarm.
- Make your sales counter clearly visible to observers.
- A clean environment is good for business and uncomfortable for robbers.
- Keep your business well-lit inside and outside
- Don't touch anything the robber may have touched.
- Ask witnesses to stay until the police arrive.
- Only step outside when the police arrive and contact you via telephone.
- Call your business owner, manager or other designated person.

TIPS

- DURING A ROBBERY**
- Stay calm and don't resist!
 - Do as instructed. Don't make sudden moves.
 - Keep your hands in sight at all times.
 - Get a look at the robber but don't stare.
 - If safe - Get a description of the robber's vehicle and direction of travel.
 - Activate the panic alarm ONLY when it's safe.
 - Personal safety first! Money and merchandise are not important.
 - Don't chase or follow the robber out of your place of business. Let the police catch the robber!
- AFTER A ROBBERY**
- Close the store and lock the doors.
 - Call the police; even if the alarm was activated.
 - Use a drop safe that is secured to the floor.
 - Post signs indicating limited cash on hand.
 - Professionally install security cameras to capture the best images of the suspects.
 - Trim landscaping for good view into and out of your business.
- Should you be a victim of crime, please do not resist but take note of the description of the culprit e.g. his appearance, clothing, height, physical details and the direction or mode of escape. Call the police as soon as it is safe.
- If you come across any suspicious person(s) loitering around your business or have any information pertaining to any crime, call the police at emergency number '919' or Crime Stoppers at 328-tips (New Providence), 1-300-8476 (Family Islands).

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LOCAL NEWS

Women inspired by farming projects



PROFESSIONAL women in agriculture. Gaming Board auditor Chavara Roker (left) and National Workers Credit Union marketing representative Lateisha Dean are set to take part in citrus production in North Andros. At centre is BAIC assistant general manager, Judith Thompson. Photo: Gladstone Thurston/BIS

By **GLADSTONE THURSTON**
Bahamas Information Services

FARMING ventures in North Andros are inspiring two Bahamian women professionals.

Lateisha Dean, marketing representative with the National Workers Credit Union, and Chavara Roker, Gaming Board auditor, are convinced that Andros is key to solving much of the nation's economic challenges.

In collaboration with Bahamas Agricultural and Industrial Corporation (BAIC), they are set to embark on citrus production in San Andros and tap into the nation's \$500 million food import bill.

"We are delighted to see young professional Bahamian women step forward to take the challenge to demonstrate to young women opportunities that are available in our Bahamas," said BAIC assistant general manager Judith Thompson.

"We will do the best we can to assist them in achieving their goals thereby inspiring the economic empowerment of a significant segment of our population."

This project resonates with objectives of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the theme of which is "the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges".

CSW 56th session will be held from February 27 to March 9 in New York.

In preparation for the upcoming session, an Expert Group Meeting (EGM) was held to explore a wide range of strategies that can enhance the economic empowerment of rural women and the role that agriculture can play in this regard.

The EGM focused on:
• Rural women's strength-

ened role in agriculture;

• Rural women's access to productive resources, technology markets and financing;

• Decent and productive employment and income-generating opportunities for rural women;

• Infrastructure and service-delivery that benefit rural women;

• Rural women's role in natural resource management and climate change adaptation;

• Effective institutions and enabling policy environment that promotes gender responsive rural development.

Miss Dean explained what inspired her toward rural life, despite having found success in her career path.

"Based on the way things are going, I figured, why not get into something that is all natural, something that references the Bahamas, certainly out of the norm in terms of what persons would go after," she said.

"At the end of the day, I decided to try citrus production as an opportunity toward economic empowerment."

She still finds time for an important mentorship program she spearheads. Presently, she is caring for seven girls.

"It's been an interesting journey. God has blessed me and so I want to be a blessing to them," she said. "That's my call."

Miss Roker will be returning to her roots.

She was born on one of the Bahamas Agriculture Research Centre (BARC) farms in North Andros and grew up there with her grand parents.

Some two years ago, she found herself pondering what was she going to do with her life.

"It's good to have a profession but I wanted some means of fulfilment," she said.

"I may not look like the

typical farming girl, but I have a passion for farming.

"It is amazing that where you start is where you end up."

Having researched citrus production, with BAIC's assistance she has obtained five acres in San Andros and 200 lime trees.

"I am confident the venture will succeed. It is something that can sustain me for a very long time if managed properly," said Miss Roker.

"I see this venture as empowering other persons also as it will create jobs. I am grateful to BAIC for their assistance."

Miss Roker is so passionate about Andros, she sees herself returning home and assisting with that island's development.

"Andros has endless possibilities. We have a lot of land and we have a lot of water.

"There are so much opportunities with regard to entrepreneurship."

Miss Dean has no intention of remaining in North Andros.

Her plans are to take her programme of women economic empowerment throughout the islands.

"Chavara and I are not the norm," she added.

"However, in defying the odds, we are changing the faces of what people expect you to be."

Executive chairman Edison M Key has noted that much of the \$500 million in food imported into The Bahamas each year can be produced here.

BAIC has made it a goal to assist in strengthening farmers associations throughout the islands and keep them linked with leading buyers in New Providence, Abaco and Grand Bahama.

Last month's farmers/buyers conference attracted delegates from the Ministry of Tourism, the Bahamas Hotel Association and the Bahamas Culinary Association.

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LOCAL NEWS

Expert title for lionfish project workers

BIOLOGISTS are in the front line when it comes to protecting our marine ecosystems from natural and human-driven threats.

This September 2011, 11 Bahamian biologists from six local organisations working on the National Lionfish Control Pilot Project made history by becoming the first Bahamians to achieve expert level status in the Reef Environmental Education Foundation (REEF) Fish Survey Project.

The National Lionfish Control Pilot Project is part of a larger Caribbean initiative called "Mitigating the Threats of Invasive Alien Species in the Insular Caribbean" (MTI-ASIC).

The project is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) through the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and is locally executed by the Department of Marine Resources.

Starting in 2009, it continues until next year and focuses on lionfish ecological research, invasive species policy and legislation review, professional training, and public outreach and education.

Lakeshia Anderson is the National Project Co-ordinator for the Bahamas. She oversees all branches of the project, including the pilot experiment, and represents the Bahamas at regional invasive species meetings.

She said: "The Bahamas team is doing an exceptional

job in executing the experimental arm of the project.

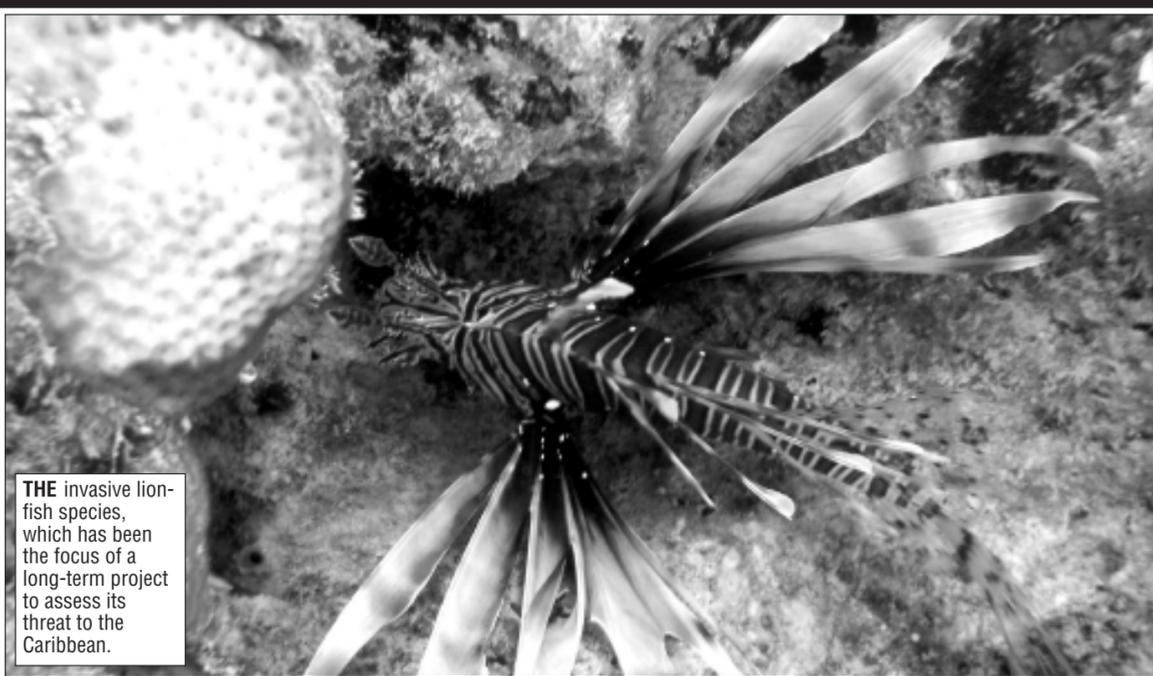
"The REEF training course has enabled members of the team to identify what is native to The Bahamas so that we can recognise what is non-native; thus, building capacity to monitor for potential marine invasive species.

"No other Caribbean country amongst the four other MTIASIC project participating nations exemplifies this level of training, which is one of the major achievements of the Lionfish Control Pilot Project to date."

REEF is a non-profit organisation founded in 1990 with headquarters in Key Largo, FL and staff based in San Diego, CA and Seattle, WA. The Fish Survey Project was created in order to train and encourage recreational divers to systematically gather data on fish diversity and abundance over large geographical areas, which could then be used by scientists, resource managers, educators and conservation groups.

Nicola Smith is the experiment co-ordinator of the Bahamas' Lionfish Control Pilot Project. She is in charge of ecological research and also identifies local training needs.

She said: "Many Bahamian biologists are educated abroad in universities in the US, Canada and the UK. This means that when they return home to work, they are well versed in the theory and practice of science, but often lack knowledge of the plants



THE invasive lionfish species, which has been the focus of a long-term project to assess its threat to the Caribbean.

and animals native to the Bahamas.

"REEF members have worked extensively in the Bahamas over the years and their founding members, Paul Humann and Ned DeLoach, have published four editions of a field guide to fish identification for Florida, Bahamas, and the Caribbean.

"This field guide is accurate, informative and accessible, making it an invaluable resource that is used by both scientists and marine enthusiasts alike. REEF has also developed a comprehensive program for training divers to visually identify fish.

"As part of the Lionfish Control Pilot Project, we are investigating the impacts of lionfish on native fish communities on coral reefs and in mangrove systems.

"This requires that you know hundreds of species of fish in their adult and juvenile forms, which sometimes differ markedly from each other. The REEF Fish Survey training program equips Bahamians with the fish identification skills necessary to effectively execute the series of experiments that we've planned."

Bahamians with REEF expert level 5 surveyor certification are now qualified to train others to the same level.

This applies not just to people interested in learning fish that occur in the Bahamas but also, more broadly to people wanting to identify fish native to the Tropical Western Atlantic Ocean, as the course covers species found in the entire region.

Lad Akins, REEF's director of special projects, led the training program for the Bahamas, which took place in three phases during 2011.

He said: "It is exciting to see Bahamian researchers and

resource managers building a strong repertoire of expertise in field work. Along with their outstanding achievements in Caribbean fish identification related to the lionfish issue, their skills will surely be widely used in impact assessments, MPA research, and a plethora of ongoing science in the Bahamas. Plus it's fun to know your fish!"

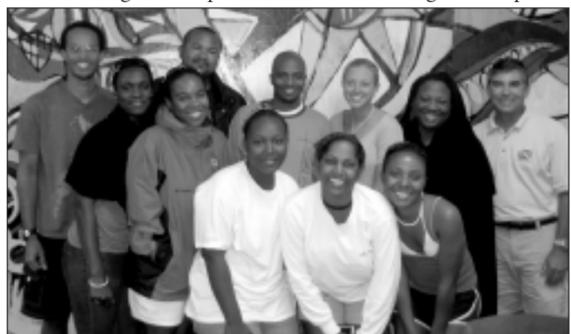
Bahamian biologists were trained in a variety of field survey techniques for handling, collecting and dissecting lionfish for stomach content analyses. Stephanie Green, a PhD student at Simon Fraser University, led this training.

She said: "The Bahamas is currently producing excellent young scientists who are truly passionate about conserving the marine environment for future generations.

"The research skills this team acquired through training with the National Lionfish Control Pilot Project will help them produce the high-quality science needed to inform management decisions within the Bahamas relating to the lionfish invasion and many other environmental issues. They are also contributing to conservation across the region through international collaborations and projects. These skilled individuals will likely play a key role in mentoring other young Bahamians to continue and expand upon the legacy of marine stewardship that is growing within the country."

Indeed, this latest achievement goes beyond just naming fish and learning new research techniques, it signifies a major step toward building national capacity in marine science, management and conservation for the Bahamas.

For more information, visit www.reef.org.



MEMBERS of the Bahamas Lionfish Control Pilot Project. Back row (left to right): Ancilleno Davis, LaKeshia Anderson, Krista Sherman, Jared Dillet, Frederick Arnett II, Skylar Miller, Indira Brown, Lad Akins. Front row (left to right): Trueranda Cox, Stacy Lubin-Gray, Nicola Smith. Not pictured: Stephanie Green and Lindy Knowles.

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LOCAL NEWS

The French bridge to Brazil

By SIR RONALD SANDERS

THE world is about to see Europe linked to South America in a way that has never happened before. A bridge will link French Guiana, the

last European outpost in the Americas, with Brazil the largest country in South America and now the sixth largest economy in the world.

There are other physical links to Brazil, but none from

Europe. Once the bridge between French Guiana and Brazil is opened, so too will open the opportunity for greater trade and investment between the European Union (EU) and Brazil since for all administrative purposes French Guiana is as much a part of France as Paris.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy, whose country is just ahead of Brazil in the rankings of the world's largest economies, will probably announce the opening of the bridge across the Oyapock River, French Guiana's border with Brazil, while he is in French Guiana as part of a campaign whipping up support for his shot at a second term as President.

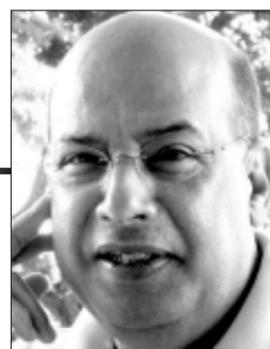
His interest in the relationship between French Guiana and Brazil will go beyond the physical link between the two neighbours to the economic opportunities it can provide for France and by extension the EU. Brazil has a population of about 200 million and its economy grew by 7.5 per cent in 2010, and was forecast to grow another 3.5 per cent in 2011. It is rich in natural resources and is open to European investment.

On the other side, Brazil has a vibrant manufacturing sector and, remarkably, it sells more to China than it imports. For Brazil, the link to French Guiana could lead to a direct land-crossing to the Atlantic Ocean for parts of its huge territory from which overland transportation to its own Atlantic coast is expensive.

This possibility will be additional to a border-crossing established in 2009 between Brazil and Guyana when a bridge was built over the Takutu River that barely divides the two countries at Brazil's northern point. However, while the bridge accommodates regular traffic between Brazil's northern area, Roraima, and Guyana, there is not an all-weather road from the bridge to Guyana's coast. Until the all-weather road is constructed, Brazil still cannot use Guyana effectively for transporting

insight

WORLD VIEW



exports from its northern region.

If French Guiana opens the 1,240-ft-long bridge for business, it will connect the towns of Saint-Georges-de-l'Oyapock and Oiapoque on the French and Brazilian sides, and the opportunities for commerce not only between the two neighbours, but between France and Brazil will expand rapidly.

The opening of this bridge need not rival or displace the already-opened link between Guyana and Brazil provided an all-weather road, estimated at US\$40 million, is built from the Guyana border town, Lethem, to Guyana's Atlantic coast. Guyana's Foreign Minister, Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, recently announced that Guyana has completed a feasibility study for the Lethem Road paving project. She is reported to have said: "We would like to see this project accelerate quickly, but we also have to be very patient."

While she did not say so, the Minister's caution could be based on the level of concessional financing that Brazil is willing to give.

Meantime, authoritative reports show that, as a result of the Takutu Bridge, the flow of commodities from Guyana to Brazil has increased. There is also a flow of Brazilians into Guyana, especially into the gold and diamond mining industries, and, increasingly, into the establishment of nightclubs and restaurants in Guyana's capital city.

The completed road would not only give Guyana an opportunity to sell commodities to Northern Brazil, it would also earn Guyana revenues from Brazilian exports moving to Guyana's sea port which would have to be con-

verted into a deep water harbour. Services to Brazilian transport vehicles would also provide new economic opportunities for Guyanese and very likely lead to new townships along the hundreds of miles of road. If the Brazilians extend their cooperation further to provide concessional financing for a deep water port in Guyana, both countries would benefit. So too, would the countries of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) whose people would find jobs in an expanded Guyana economy, and whose manufacturing industries could access Northern Brazil through Guyana.

The Guyana-Brazil relationship would have to be carefully negotiated to ensure that Guyana is not overwhelmed. While there is no tension between Guyana and Brazil, some of Brazil's other neighbours in South America – particularly Bolivia and Paraguay – have complained about Brazil flexing its new found political and economic muscle.

Marcel Biato, Brazil's ambassador to Bolivia, said, about infrastructure financing in Bolivia and elsewhere in South America, "We want Brazil to be surrounded by prosperous, stable countries." Other Brazilian authorities have argued that their country has access to sources of raw materials other than its immediate neighbours and that it has routes across the continent through which it can send goods to ports on the Pacific. That may be so, but it is cheaper for Brazil to secure raw materials it needs from their closest point, and the Governor of Roraima has made it clear that it would be cheaper for manufacturing industries in his State to be

able to ship their goods to the Atlantic through Guyana.

It is very much in Brazil's interest to allay the fears of its neighbours and to monitor carefully the behaviour of some of its companies operating in nearby countries, or, over time, it could be tainted with the same image of bullying that Latin American and Caribbean countries applied to the US. That would not be good for Brazil or its neighbours.

As the Brazilian economic ship rises in the sea of economic fortunes it has the chance to pull along the smaller economies around it in a manner that commands respect and support.

The bridges to two of the Guianas – Guyana and French Guiana – as well as the increasing economic links to the third of the Guianas – Suriname – offer great opportunities for Brazil.

As for Guyana, the all-weather road to Brazil will be a catalyst for further economic growth and a gateway to South America for the Caribbean Community countries. As two developing countries with shared interests in the international arena, Guyana and Brazil should cement a fair, balanced and co-operative agreement to ensure mutual benefits and gains whatever happens with the connection between France and Brazil through the use of French Guiana.

• Responses and previous commentaries at: www.sirronaldsanders.com.

The writer is a consultant and former Caribbean diplomat

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LOCAL NEWS



Bowling alley's CELEBRATION

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Photos: **Felipe Major**/Tribune Staff



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