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EXCHANGE HOPE FOR SOCCER CLINIC - SEE SPORTS SECTION E

WOMEN SHINE IN A MAN'S WORLD - SEE WOMAN 11B



600 child abuse cases in a year

Number of incidents rise by a quarter

By DANA SMITH
dsmith@tribunemedia.net

MORE than 600 cases of child abuse were reported to the department of Social Services last year, according to Social Development Minister Loretta Butler-Turner.

The Long Island FNM candidate was speaking in the House yesterday, responding to questions from PLP Yamacraw incumbent, Melanie Griffin.

Mrs Butler-Turner was asked by Mrs Griffin about regulations concerning the Child Protection Act.

The Act, among other things, increased penalties for child abuse, made it mandatory to report all forms of abuse, and raised the age limit for the juvenile detention centres to 18 years from 16.

"The regulations for the Child Protection Act 2007 have been drafted and are being vetted," Mrs Butler-Turner said.

"While the framework has been established, the Children's Register nor the Child Abuse Registry are operating in the format identified by the Act. The Department of Social Services does however maintain a record of all reported cases of abuse."

She said there has been 482 cases of abuse reported to the department between January and September 2011, with the total number for last year being 636, a 24 per cent increase from 2010's reported number of 483.

"Action continues to be taken on educating the public on the provisions of the Child Protection Act, particularly during Child Protection Month and through regular speaking engagements to churches and civic organisations," Mrs Butler-Turner said.

When asked about escapees from the Simpson

SEE page 9

UNION IN ROW WITH SANDALS RESORT



A DEMONSTRATION is staged outside Sandals as union members accused the resort of forcing employees to sign a petition stating they did not want union representation.

By DANA SMITH
dsmith@tribunemedia.net

UNION officials claim Sandals Royal Bahamian Resorts forced its employees to sign a petition stating they do not want union representation and threatened them with termination if they refused to sign.

Lynden Taylor, Bahamas Hotel, Maintenance and Allied Workers Union (BHMAWU) president, said the resort "violated" their employees' rights.

He further alleged Labour

Minister, Senator Dion Foulkes, is in league with Sandals, claiming he knew about the alleged forced petition and did nothing.

Sandals has vehemently denied the claims, calling them "untrue" and "duplicious".

At a protest outside the West Bay Street resort, yesterday, Mr Taylor said: "On Friday, Sandals management called a general meeting, a mandatory meeting - that all workers show up to this meeting, but this meeting was designed to have the

workers sign a petition that they don't wish to have a union to represent them. That they would like the general manager to handle all their questions and concerns.

"Now over half of the staff, almost all, walked out of the meeting. But they're walking around to different departments, and they are actually forcing you, impressing upon you to sign these documents. Now, they have actually threatened a few persons by telling them that

SEE page 2

Photo: Felipe Major/Tribune Staff

CUT IN WORK PERMITS TO HELP BAHAMIANS

By SANCHESKA BROWN
Tribune News Reporter
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BECAUSE of the high level of unemployment, the Department of Immigration decreased the number of work permits issued in 2011 by 24 per cent, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Immigration Brent Symonette said yesterday.

From January 1 to December 31, 2011, the Department of Immigration issued 7,091 work permits, 2,299 less than the 9,390 issued in 2010 and 1,025 less than 2009.

Mr Symonette revealed these statistics while answering questions posed to him by Opposition members in the House of Assembly.

"We are putting Bahamians first," Mr Symonette said.

SEE page 9

WEAR AND TEAR OF RESPONDING TO 911 CALLS

By CHESTER ROBARDS
Tribune Senior Reporter
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RESPONDING to violence-related emergency calls was the major cause of extreme wear and tear on the country's ambulances last year, a Public Hospitals Authority statement claimed yesterday.

Herbert Brown, the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) managing director, said Emergency Medical Services (EMS) responded to almost 18,000 emergency calls last year, and as of last month had already logged 1,400 emergency calls.

"This in any country would place incredible strain on these vehicles," he said.

SEE page 9

BREAK-IN AT DNA OFFICE

THE Democratic National Alliance is considering increasing security to campaign offices after its Bain and Grants Town headquarters was hit by theft yesterday.

The break-in was discovered around 6.30am by DNA candidate for the area Rodney Moncur, who said the incident was "petty criminality".

Mr Moncur said: "An examination of the (back) door revealed that someone

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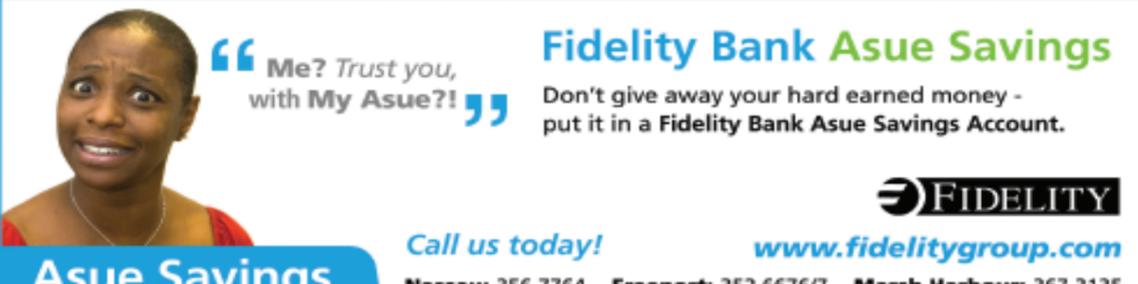
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MYSTERY OVER CAR COLLISION REPORTS

By SANCHESKA BROWN
Tribune Staff Reporter
sbrown@tribunemedia.net

THERE are reports of a head-on collision late Saturday night on the airport road. However, police seemed to know nothing about it.

The Tribune understands the drivers of the vehicles sustained serious injuries and had to be rushed to the hospital.

However, when contacted, traffic police seemed to have no knowledge of the crash.

An eyewitness at the scene, who wished to remain anonymous, said the driver of a small vehicle was travelling on the wrong side of the road and collided with a truck.

"The vehicle was being driven by a Chinese male and there was a passenger in front and a woman in the back, they were driving on the wrong side of the road and the truck didn't see them and they crashed.

"The car was pinned between a tree and a truck. The driver of the truck got out, he was hurt but seemed to be okay," the witness said.

"However, the Chinese woman in the back of the car was pinned, blood was everywhere. She couldn't get out.

"There was another car that was following them and those people pulled the two men, the driver and the passenger, out of the car and put them on the side of the road."

"They looked unconscious. But they did not move the woman because she was severely hurt. Police came a short time later and I left."

Up to last night, police had not released a report on the accident.

Union in row with Sandals resort

from page one

if you don't sign, we will fire you."

He claimed Mr Foulkes knew of the forced petition since the day it started, as did the Director of Labour, Harcourt Brown.

"I guess the minister of labour is a part of this exercise - that's how it looks to me because I'm sure he's aware of it," Mr Taylor said. "Nothing was said in regards to this, he got a call from (a) lawyer on Friday, so he knows what's taking place. The director had a call as well, so they know what's taking place."

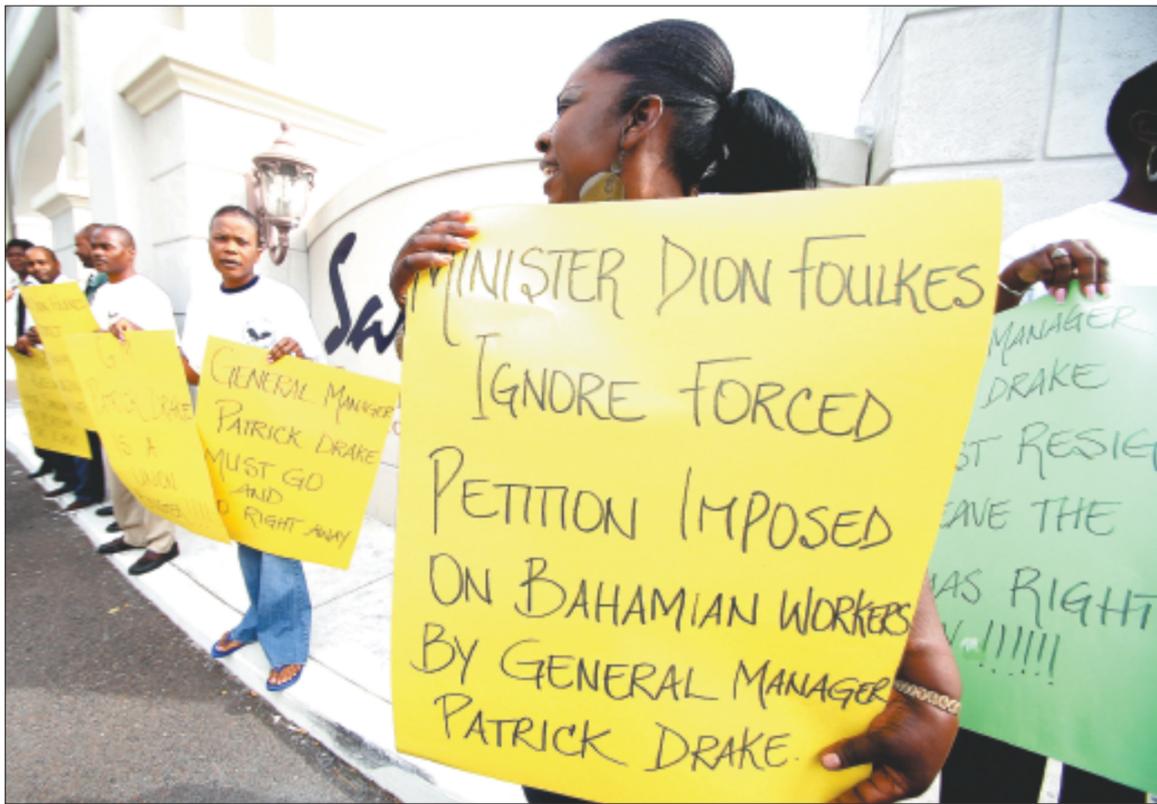
He continued: "Now the minister knows about this... and the director knows about this. Yet, it still continued Friday night, Saturday morning, Saturday night, Sunday morning, Sunday night. Now you tell me, the ministry knows about this and doesn't take action to stop this? This is ridiculous. They're in on it."

Yesterday afternoon, Sandals' general manager, Patrick Drake, released a statement in response to the union's claims.

"The management of Sandals Royal Bahamian unreservedly rejects any claims that the hotel is engaged in union busting or any acts of intimidation against our employees," he said.

"The charges made by the BHMAWU are completely false but are consistent with the duplicity that the union has displayed in its tactics aimed at riding rough-shod over the management and employees of the hotel."

Mr Drake said Sandals "fully respects and upholds all the



UNION MEMBERS staged a protest outside Sandals amid claims of union busting by the management. Photos: **Felipe Major/Tribune Staff**

laws" of the Bahamas, including the right for workers to be represented by a body of their choice.

The resort also "recognises the right of workers to sign a petition to the Minister of Labour requesting revocation of union representation.

"Accordingly, a significant portion of our employees have exercised their lawful right and have signed a petition to the Minister. This is their right, although the

BHMAWU has failed to acknowledge this," Mr Drake said.

He noted 70 per cent of current employees were not employed when the vote for unionisation involving BHMAWU was taken in 2009, and any attempt to "settle the question of union representation" must allow the present workers "an opportunity to indicate whether they desire to be part of this union."

"Discussions that have taken place between the management and team members have merely sought to ensure that employees get the opportunity to express their will."

Mr Drake continued: "In its quest to bulldoze its way over the management and staff of the hotel, the BHMAWU has sought to malign the management and paint an untrue picture of disgruntlement and unrest at the resort. Nothing could be fur-

ther from the truth, as morale, unity and teamwork at the resort has never been better.

"We are not surprised at these developments, however, because they follow the pattern of careless and false utterances and blatant subterfuge which has characterized the modus operandi of the union."

Both BHMAWU and Sandals have a meeting scheduled for tomorrow with Mr Foulkes. Mr Taylor believes Sandals will use this meeting to present the petition.

When reached for comment, Mr Foulkes confirmed the meeting and stated the alleged forced petition is under investigation, but would not offer anything more.

"I'm having a meeting with both Management and Union on Wednesday," he said. "We are conducting an investigation with respect to the new allegations of union busting."



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LOCAL NEWS

Doctors Hospital rejects criticism

DOCTORS Hospital has hit back at an article printed in *The Tribune* on Monday, January 23, claiming the Bahamas lacks state-of-the-art breast cancer diagnostic tools.

The Doctors Hospital imaging department, which conducts close to 4,000 mammograms a year, says it has on site all of the latest diagnostic equipment.

The Hologic Selenia full-field digital mammography system was installed at Doctors Hospital two years ago and is the very latest technology on the market.

"This is the current state-of-the-art digital mammography machine and Hologic is the industry leader," explained Doctors Hospital Chief Radiologist Dr Larry Carroll.

Doctors Hospital digital imaging department also has the ability to offer patients a breast MRI, something many facilities in the United States are not yet offering.

The MRI is not generally used for screening purposes because of the costs involved in having the procedure done, but Dr Carroll says it becomes an extremely useful option and is the current stan-

dard of care in cases where there is either a high risk because of a woman's family history or initial screening shows a questionable lesion which requires additional scrutiny.

In addition to the Hologic Selenia Digital Mammography system and the MRI, Doctors Hospital has the only 3-D automated breast ultrasound machine in the country. This diagnostic tool enables radiologists and physicians to take a CT-scan like ultrasound image of the breast, peeling away half a millimeter of breast tissue at a

time, picking up abnormalities the size of a match head.

"What we have is the 26th unit of its kind installed in this hemisphere. This machine is only now being rolled out as the new standard of care worldwide," explained Dr Carroll.

In addition to having the latest technology, Doctors Hospital has a highly trained team of radiologists and technologists and adheres to the highest international standards and US Mammography Quality Standards Act as well as the American College of Radiology guidelines.

In 2010, Doctors Hospital became and remains the only acute care hospital in the region to gain Joint Commission International accreditation, and Dr Carroll explained that in order to maintain this accreditation, his team must follow a set quality control protocol that includes calibrating and checking every machine including computer monitors to ensure they get the most accurate reading on every mammogram that is conducted.

"There is nothing within the local law that requires any facility here to conduct the

level of testing that we at Doctors Hospital are required to do," he explained, "having the machine is not enough to guarantee the best quality mammograms. One of the areas of weakness in mammography in The Bahamas is the lack of quality standard regulations and enforcement, but Doctors Hospital sets the pace in terms of following global best practices."

Doctors Hospital remains committed to investing in the best equipment and staff in order to provide the Bahamian community with the very best in healthcare.



COLIN BASTIAN outside court. Bastian, who is accused of setting fire to a home in Orange Hill last week, pleaded guilty to two further charges of threatening to kill, as well as charges of damaging a car.
Photo: **Felipe Major/Tribune Staff**

MAN ADMITS GUILT OVER DEATH THREATS

ACCUSED arsonist Colin Bastian was remanded to Her Majesty's Prison after appearing in court yesterday.

Bastian, 51, of Camilla Way, West Bay Street, is accused of intentionally and unlawfully setting fire to the 16-room Orange Hill home of Nicolette Cox on Tuesday of last week. Deputy Chief Magistrate Carolita Bethel allowed the prosecution until February 20 to consider a Voluntary Bill of Indictment that will fast-track the case to the Supreme Court for trial.

The prosecution said it will probably take this avenue. Mr Bastian was further charged with two counts of threatening to kill Ms Cox and Betty Frasier two days before the home was set on fire.

Pleading guilty to the death threats, Mr Bastian will be tried in the Magistrate's Court on both charges.

He was also charged with two counts of damaging the windshield, left driver's door, left rear light and left panel

glass of Ms Cox's white 2007 Chevrolet Tahoe. The damages total \$3,024.06.

He pled guilty to the charges. Mr Bastian will be charged with one more count of damage when he returns to court on Friday.

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POLICE CLOSE DOWN PRIVATE SCHOOL

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

POLICE say they were forced to shut down a private school after information was received that the owner did not have the required documents to operate the institution.

Yesterday, Leadership Academy, at Dick's Point, on Eastern Road, was forced to close its doors after officers of the Licensing division-Royal Bahamas Police Force and Business License Authority officials found the school operating without a business license.

As a result, a 60-year-old woman, whom police believe

owns the school, was taken into custody.

Police are encouraging persons operating businesses to ensure their licenses are current and fees are paid. They say failing to obey the law, will result in being charged before the courts.

Meanwhile, police say they shot a 20-year-old Jamaican man after he was seen attempting to steal a car from the Palmdale area.

According to police around 11.38 am yesterday, they received information that the man was tampering with the vehicle.

Upon police arrival to the scene, the suspect was then shot in the leg and taken to

the hospital where he is listed as stable in police custody.

In other news, road traffic officials say they are continuing their clamp down on motorists who do not obey road rules.

During the past week, police in Nassau cited 435 drivers for various traffic infractions and placed 146 matters before the traffic courts.

Some of the offences include failing to move when requested by a police officer, failing to keep left, driving in the wrong direction on a one-way street, driving with an unsecured load, unlicensed and uninspected vehicles, failing to change ownership, and failing to signal.

Police would like to encourage members of the public to ensure their vehicles remain in good condition.

Their efforts agree with the Commissioner's Policing Plan to enforce road rules. They will continue to issue traffic tickets for failing to adhere obey the law.

APPEAL OVER HIT AND RUN KILLING

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

POLICE are asking members of the public with information on the East Bay Street hit and run which killed a man in his late 40s to come forward.

The man, identified as Valance Brown of Fowler Street, off East Bay Street was hit around 1am, on Sunday, west of the Harbour Bay Shopping Plaza.

Police said Mr Brown was walking on the northern side of East Bay Street when he was struck by a passing vehicle which left scene.

Police spokesperson Christlyn Skippings said police are looking for a dark green Honda.

She said: "It could be an

Accord or a Civic. We are asking members of the public who may have seen a family member or a neighbour with damage to their Honda, that were not there previously, to give us a call.

"Treat this case as if it were your family member or your friend.

"You would want someone to help you. So please help this family. Also, this person may not even know they hit someone.

"If you see damage on your car and are not sure where they came from or if you feel you may have hit something, please come forward."

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact police at 919 or the Traffic Police Station at 393-7204.

STUDENT STABBED

REPORTS reached *The Tribune* last night of a stabbing incident that left a twelfth grade male student of the Government High School with serious injuries.

It is believed that the victim was approached by a gang of male students, when one of them produced an unknown weapon, striking the victim multiple times about his body.

Eye witness accounts say the victim was bleeding heavily and had to be rushed to the hospital.

Police could not be reached up to press time.

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Greece caves in on civil service firings

GREECE'S coalition government caved in to demands to cut civil service jobs, announcing 15,000 positions would go this year, amid mounting international pressure to agree on austerity measures needed to secure major new debt agreements.

The announcement Monday signals a shift in Greece's policy, as state jobs have so far been protected during the country's acute financial crisis, which started about two years ago. Public Sector Reform Minister Dimitris Reppas said the job cuts would be carried out under a new law that allows such firings.

Unions have called a 24-hour general strike for Tuesday, in response to the new austerity measures, while about 4,000 protesters braved torrential rain late Monday to join protest rallies organized in central Athens by left-wing opposition parties.

Greece is racing to push through the painful reforms — which have yet to be agreed to by Greece's coalition partners — to clinch a \$170 billion bailout deal from its European partners and the International Monetary Fund and avoid a March default on its bond repayments. Debt-ridden Greece has been kept solvent since May 2010 by payments from a \$145 billion international rescue loan package. When it became clear the money would not be enough, a second bailout was decided last October.

As well as the austerity measures, the bailout also depends on separate talks with banks and other private bondholders to forgive \$131.6 billion in Greek debt. The private investors have been locked in negotiations over swapping their current debt for a cash payment and new bonds worth 50 per cent less than the original face value, longer repayment terms and a cut in the interest rate to be paid on the bonds. Greek government officials say they expect private investors to take an overall cut of up to 70 per cent on the value of their bonds.

However, the EU-IMF bailout has to be secured for the deal with private investors to go ahead as about euro30 billion from the bailout will be used as the cash payment in the bond swap deal.

Greece's coalition party leaders pushed back a key meeting on the austerity measures by a day until Tuesday, due to the ongoing negotiations with EU-IMF debt inspectors who were locked in talks with the government Monday.

The leaders have already agreed to cut 2012 spending by 1.5 per cent of gross domestic product — about \$4.3 billion — improve competitiveness by slashing wages and non-wage costs, and re-capitalise banks without nationalising them.

Creditors are also demanding spending cuts in defence, health and social security, a cut in the minimum wage, as well as the civil service layoffs, as European pressure increased on Greece to make more concessions.

The government has promised to reduce the 750,000-strong broader public sector by 150,000 by the end of 2015, but has so far insisted it could reach that target through staff attrition. "We are opposed to indiscriminate firings," Reppas said. "The work force reduction is strictly connected with the restructuring of services and organisations at each ministry."

Officials at the Public Sector Reform Ministry gave no details of the new plan, nor would they say how many of the job cuts would be compulsory. European Commission spokesman Amadeu Altafaj Tardio said Greece is already "beyond the deadline" to end the talks.

After talks in Paris with French President Nicolas Sarkozy, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said there can be no bailout deal unless Athens implements creditors' proposals.

"(The proposals) are on the table," she said. "And time is pressing. Therefore, something has to happen quickly."

"Time is pressing and for the entire eurozone much is at stake," Merkel added.

In Athens, talks between the government and debt inspectors from the EU, IMF and the European Central Bank — known as the troika — dragged into early Tuesday.

"The negotiations with the troika are ongoing for the new loan programme. It is clear that there is a lot of pressure being put on the country. A lot of pressure is being placed on the Greek people," Finance Minister Evangelos Venizelos said during a break in the talks.

He called on coalition parties to end the bickering and work more closely together. "No one is as strong as Hercules on his own to face the Lernaean Hydra," a swamp monster in Greek mythology, he said. "We must all, together, fight this battle, without petty party motives and slick moves."

Greece is in its fifth year of recession, while unemployment has hit record highs of about 19 per cent — following a spate of austerity measures in return for the rescue loans, that included significant cuts in pensions and salaries coupled with repeated tax hikes and an increase in retirement ages.

"The current policy of austerity ... is turning workers into pariahs, jobless people and pensioners into paupers and deprives our youth of any hope," a statement from the main civil servants' union ADEDY said. "This policy has already pushed Greeks beyond their limits and must be stopped at any cost."

Yiannis Panagopoulos, leader of Greece's largest union, the GSEE, said the creditors' demands were certain to lead to more hardship.

"What is going on is not a negotiation," he said. "It's blunt, cynical blackmail targeting an entire people."

By Derek Gatopoulos and Nicholas Paphitis of the Associated Press

Caught in a US v China drama

EDITOR, The Tribune.

IN A LETTER published in today's paper, a writer opines that sooner or later the Bahamas will be "caught up in something", because the interests of China and the United States will eventually clash, and at that time we will have an epiphany.

He also states that we will have a choice to make at that time; I beg to differ. We have already made a choice, we have chosen to play the two Super Powers against each other in the name of "progress" and jobs.

I agree that we will have an epiphany but it will be about how to survive in this drama that we are creating for ourselves.

The politicians who are making the choices seem to be clueless about our situation; and this cluelessness is inclusive of those in the FNM, PLP, and the DNA.

The only persons who are going to survive this event are those who own something tangible and have not allowed themselves to be sold the lie that all we have to do as Bahamians is "believe in ourselves", "vote for the change you want to see", etc; etc; etc.

Realistically, there is nothing wrong in belief or change, but we have made the awful mistake of having persons with very questionable agendas, redefining what belief or change means every five years; and the tools of fear and distrust are used to sell these subjective definitions.

We have to blame ourselves, we have not held ourselves or the persons who lead us as accountable as we should; and what is strange to me, is that in spite of all that is going on, this nation is on a

LETTERS

letters@tribunemedia.net

precarious "even keel" because the present Prime Minister has chosen to hold himself accountable.

Even this reality seems to be problematic as we look at what those who would like to replace him and his party are saying.

Is it enough to want to change a government, because your pay increase did not come on time?

Is it enough to believe that persons who have no track record of getting things done can be elected, and when they are able to get things done because you have given them another chance?

Forty years into it, it is going to take more than words or subjectively entitled utterances of what it means to be Bahamian, to guide us into "this" promised land, because the ground we are now treading bears no resemblance to the one that we were promised.

Even the group that brought us into this "land" more than forty years ago, now find themselves in a political wilderness, looking to Madison Avenue and international public relations firms for a definition of who they are or how they should present themselves.

I will not be able to close this letter, without comment on the Atlantis issue. Should we entertain comments from agenda driven persons, who though qualified choose to paint a picture that brings attention to their personal political biases?

Atlantis is having "internal

problems" but should those problems be expressed in such a way that makes a person planning to visit this nation think twice about their decision?

We must concede that the Dubai foray was ill-advised. Two billion is a lot of money, but it is not enough in that market and the head Arawak could have used his time in the spotlight to give the Bahamian public an objective view, but he chose to let his politics frame his presentation.

Politicians and myself do not get along, but whosoever is going to speak for me is going to be held to a standard that has nothing with "subjectivity", and even though we are going to have some pain when hard decisions are made, it is only the objective exercises and views that get us through, regardless of the onslaught of perceptions we are being bombarded with, by all and sundry.

Right now, especially for the under-sixty crowd, "it is what it is" and there is no time to be playing games or going down a road that refuses to put things in perspective.

It is 2012 and the world is coming to our door to see what it is we are doing on the 21x7 plus. Let us fight in such a way that makes us stronger and better, 'cause after the smoke clears in May 2012, there will still be a lot of work to be done. We may get discouraged even when we do good, but this is how we are going to get through.

EDWARD HUTCHESON

Nassau,
February 2, 2012.

Heartening return of Abner Pinder

EDITOR, The Tribune.

I WAS taken by a recent letter to *The Tribune* indicating that Mr Gilbert Pinder of the PLP had resigned after being voted to serve as Chief Councillor back in June 2011, particularly after a website that supports the PLP made such a fuss about his winning the post.

It is heartening news that

Mr Abner Pinder of the FNM has been asked to resume the post of Chief Councillor for Spanish Wells, Eleuthera, once again after Mr Gilbert Pinder resigned.

Mr Abner Pinder served ALL the people of Spanish Wells for 15 years in an exemplary manner and is deserving of the honour.

As an aside, I visited Spanish Wells in late December and went into Mr Gilbert Pinder's store to buy some fish and the three or four employees were dressed in PLP paraphernalia. This was in contrast to visiting Mr Abner Pinder's business where there were no political

"colours" of any kind being displayed.

The company I work for does not allow associates to wear political garb as our clientele and associates are from all walks of life and political persuasions.

Back to the chief councillor of Spanish Wells.

It seems hype is more important to some in politics than service. And Mr Abner Pinder gives all of the people of Spanish Wells (PLP or FNM) the service they deserve.

Rich Lowe
www.weblogbahamas.com

School bus danger

EDITOR, The Tribune.

THE movie "Forest Gump" starring Tom Hanks is one of my best movies. I never tire watching this movie. One of Tom Hanks lines in the movie reads, "Stupid is as stupid does".

Students on the Carmichael Road strip are riding on a large yellow school bus daily. They get dropped off after school to certain points.

What is horrifying is that the exit is on the right-hand side of the bus. Yes, the exit is on the right hand-side. This means that students exit the bus onto the main road.

Are we serious? This is a disaster waiting to happen.

Unions not helping

EDITOR, The Tribune.

IT DOES not take a genius to understand that a decrease in travel world wide would affect tourism in our part of the world.

Lower tourism dollars means less money in the Treasury. Why then do unions choose this time to agitate for more money for their members when there are fewer dollars and overstaffing in

government agencies?

Instead of gloating over the continuing recession, members and leaders in opposition should co-operate with the government if we love our country.

It would not surprise me to learn who the people are behind the union activities.

A BAHAMIAN VOTER
Nassau,
January 31, 2012.

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NOTICE

NOTICE is hereby given that PABLO FELIZ GOMEZ of Ridgeland Park West, P.O. Box SB-51780, Nassau, Bahamas is applying to the Minister responsible for Nationality and Citizenship, for registration/naturalization as a citizen of The Bahamas, and that any person who knows any reason why registration/naturalization should not be granted, should send a written and signed statement of the facts within twenty-eight days from the 31st day of JANUARY, 2012 to the Minister responsible for nationality and Citizenship, P.O. Box N-7147, Nassau, Bahamas.

THANKS from The Medical & Dental Care Centre

Dr. Butler, Dr. Erskine and the staff at the Medical and Dental Care Centre on Thompson Blvd.

next the the Reef Restaurant apologise for the inconvenience caused by the ongoing road works and would sincerely like to THANK our loyal customers for continued patronage.

We intend to remain open for business throughout the road building process.

To our old customers:
We look forward to serving you this year 2012 with our usual friendly atmosphere and excellence in treatment.
If you have not been to see us yet, we look forward to serving you this year and welcome YOU in advance.

Best Wishes to all for the New Year.

(Tel: 356-4325 and 356-4326)

PM reassures public over air safety record

By CELESTE NIXON
Tribune Staff Reporter
cnixon@tribunemedia.net

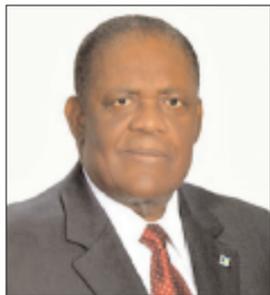
RESPONDING to concerns about safety issues within the aviation industry, Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham yesterday assured Parliament that the Bahamas' record demonstrates that a "satisfactory level" of safety is being met.

Mr Ingraham was addressing concerns put forth by Fox Hill MP Fred Mitchell regarding the safety of non-Bahamasair services and whether the proper measures were being taken and regulations adhered to.

While confirming that allegations were reported by pilots of non-Bahamasair airline companies last April about working conditions and safety issues, Mr Ingraham said: "The Government is satisfied that the safety system checks and balances are adequately maintained by the Civil Aviation Department.

"The safety record of the Bahamas aviation sector is a testament to this, but this record requires the continued support and cooperation of the flying public, pilots, mechanics, airline operators and regulators to ensure its continuing and continuous integrity."

In response to questions



PRIME MINISTER Hubert Ingraham said the Government is satisfied with the safety system raised by pilots regarding certain airlines' maintenance capabilities, Mr Ingraham said several maintenance inspections have been carried out by the Principal Maintenance Inspectors (PMI) from the Flight Standards Inspectorate (FSI) over the past few months and all deficiencies found were corrected.

In order to modernise and strengthen the sector, Mr Ingraham said the Government has obtained a \$50 million-loan from the Inter-American Development Bank to overhaul the Bahamian civil aviation industry.

Under the IDB loan, he said "the government is set to undertake one of the more comprehensive and ambitious initiatives in our history to enhance aviation".

This will improve air transportation systems, increase flights and airlift across the Bahamas, while modernising airports, the Prime Minister said.

Further, he said an independent body will be established to investigate aviation incidents and accidents.

Although labour-related issues between the operator and pilots do not fall under the jurisdiction of the Department of Civil Aviation, Mr Ingraham also responded to inquires and allegations that pilots were fatigued as a result of being forced to work beyond their 14 hours of mandated duty.

He said that during a meeting with the Minister of Tourism Vincent Vanderpool-Wallace, pilots indicated they were fatigued because they were sometimes required to work beyond their duty times.

However, Mr Ingraham said this is not normal practice as he was advised that most airline operators currently have operation specifications providing 10 flights in a 14 consecutive hour period.

Mr Ingraham advised that pilots and other employees who feel that their working conditions are in violation of the Employment Act should file an official complaint with the Department of Labour.



ANDRE BIRBAL is escorted by a police officer. The former teacher is appealing his conviction for having sex with two former students.

CONVICTED PAEDOPHILE'S APPEAL DELAYED

By LAMECH JOHNSON
Tribune Staff Reporter
ljohnson@tribunemedia.net

THE Court of Appeal hearing of convicted paedophile Andre Birbal was delayed yesterday because defence counsel had not filed the written arguments concerning the appeal with the court.

In yesterday's proceedings before appellate court Justices Anita Allen, Stanley John and Abdulai Conteh, the lawyer appointed to defend Birbal, Craig Butler, explained that the delay was a result of his chamber receiving the matter late last year.

Mr Butler told the court that an employee who had met with Birbal on a few occasions during his incarceration no longer worked with his firm.

He also admitted he had not had a chance to meet with his client until yesterday morning's hearing.

Appellate court president Justice Allen did not accept the reason and said: "Mr Butler, this matter has been placed on the cause list since the 15th of January. How are you not ready?"

Justice Conteh then asked the attorney if he had received the trial transcripts?

"That's all you need to file grounds of appeal or to amend," he said.

After Mr Butler apologised to the court for not having the necessary documents in place, Justice Allen said the matter needed to be dealt with as soon as possible, as Birbal's appeal had been filed since last February.

They asked the attorney if he was prepared to proceed on March 12. "Yes, my lord," he replied.

Birbal was accused of having sexual intercourse with two former students. The incidents were alleged to have occurred between January 2002 to June 2007 with one boy, and from September 2002 to June 2005 with the second boy.

On Wednesday, January 26, 2011, a jury of seven men and two women delivered guilty verdicts in six of the eight charges against the former art teacher. His sentencing was handed down six days later.

Justice Allen yesterday told the attorney the court was not going to accept any further excuses in the future and informed Birbal his substantive appeal would be on March 12.

CANCER VICTIM GETS APPEAL DATE OVER DRUG CONVICTION

By LAMECH JOHNSON
Tribune Staff Reporter
ljohnson@tribunemedia.net

A MAN with cancer, who is challenging the minimum four-year prison sentence he received after being convicted of drug possession last November, has been given a date to have his appeal heard in the appellate court.

However, the Court of Appeal, while setting aside March 5 for the hearing, dismissed 43-year-old Anthony Armbrister's bail application due to the defence being unable to convince the court there were exceptional circumstances to allow the accused to be free until his sentencing appeal is heard.

Armbrister, on November 11, pleaded guilty before Deputy Chief Magistrate Carolita Bethell to possessing 51 grams of cocaine. He had told the magistrate he planned to

sell the drugs to pay his medical bills.

However, Deputy Chief Magistrate Bethell told the defendant her hands were tied, and regardless of his medical condition, what he had done was wrong.

At yesterday's bail hearing before appellate court president Justice Anita Allen, along with Justices Christopher Blackman and Abdulai Conteh, defence attorney Jomo Campbell raised concern of the extension of the treatment his client was receiving at the Princess Margaret Hospital.

He feared his client's penile cancer may have worsened.

"In fact, my instructions from my client is that it has spread," said Mr Campbell.

When asked about the medical reports, Mr Campbell told the justices they had not received medical reports from the hospital concerning

his client despite making requests.

Justice Allen asked the attorney for other grounds to be considered and he reasoned that his client did not receive any "credit or discount" for pleading guilty when being charged in spite of his condition.

"That is the nature of the appeal. He pleaded guilty at this earliest opportunity." Mr Campbell added that the sentencing handed down to his client was "unduly harsh and severe".

Justice Blackman retorted that the severity of the sentencing would be determined in the appeal hearing. The bail application was dismissed and they then proceeding to the second application for a time extension.

Justice Allen granted Mr Campbell a time extension to file his written submissions to the court and prosecutor Anthony Delaney.

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Dress: smart casual

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Client Relationship Officer
Vice President

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LOCAL NEWS



HEART BALL committee meets for final preparations – (seated, l-r): Rosemarie Thompson, Sheila Lady Butler, Coretta Owen, Maria Symonette, Claire Howorth; (standing, l-r): Keniqua Whitehouse, Linda Laflaur, Ingrid Sears, Michelangiolo Baccelli, Portia Nottage, Zelia Bethel, Sue Riding, and Valerie Clarke. Photo: J & J Photo Imaging, Wyndham Nassau Resort and Crystal Palace Casino

Countdown to the Heart Ball begins

THE Heart Ball committee recently met to make final preparations for the 2012 Heart Ball, the major annual fundraising event for the Sir Victor Sassoon Heart Foundation.

Described as “an evening filled with love, laughter, excitement, dancing and a soulful good time”, the Heart Ball committee said the ball will allow those in attendance to help raise money to repair the hearts of children.

“The Heart Ball committee is working arduously to ensure that this ball is better than any before. Last year, The Heart Foundation celebrated its 50th anniversary. At the start of the year 2012, we move forward with

greater financial need and thus greater challenges, as we seek to help the Heart Foundation repair hearts,” said the committee’s public relations officer, Ingrid Sears.

“The Heart Ball committee is working with a renewed determination to ensure that we maintain the legacy of the founder and also the foundation. Additionally, we wish to ensure that patrons are encouraged to attend future Heart Balls and continue to help to repair broken hearts.”

Last year, the foundation raised over \$250,000. However, all of this money has already been spent helping to repair children’s hearts.

“Heart surgeries are not

cheap and many parents simply cannot afford the cost of heart surgeries for their children. One child’s heart surgery can cost over \$50,000, despite negotiated terms. As such, a group of committed individuals are seeking to help reduce this financial burden, to parents who cannot afford it, as they try to care for their love ones,” the Heart Foundation said.

“At present, there are 11 patients in need of heart surgeries. It is anticipated that more children will need heart care during the year, and many of their parents will not be able to afford it. The funds raised from this event, will help the Heart Foundation to repair the hearts of children.”

Under the theme, “Repairing a broken Heart...What a Gift”, the 48th Annual Heart Ball will be held on Saturday, February 18, at the Sheraton Nassau Beach Resort.

The event will be held under the patronage of Governor-General Sir Arthur Foulkes and Joan Lady Foulkes. There will be live performances by The Ed Brice Orchestra, The S-G Band (Soulful Groovers) and The Royal Bahamas Defence Force Dance Band.

Highlights of the ball are expected to include the naming of The Lady Sassoon Golden Heart Award winner, who would have been selected from a pool of worthy persons nominated for their

humanitarian acts to improve the lives of others.

Additionally, the Heart Ball committee said, guests can win table prizes, raffle prizes or auction items.

Some of the prizes up for grabs include a round-trip ticket for two on British Airways to London; round-trip tickets for two on Air Canada and hotel accommodations in Canada; an emerald and diamond ring, spa treatments and dinners.

There will also be paintings and prints from the likes of the late Chan Pratt, Clifford Fernander, Nettica Symonette, and many more artists. Corporate sponsors can look forward to dance floor accommodations, champagne

and special treats provided by John Bull, the committee said.

The Heart Ball committee is the fundraising arm of The Sir Victor Sassoon (Bahamas) Heart Foundation. The foundation’s main goal is to assist persons, primarily children, with heart care. Additionally, the foundation, in conjunction with the Bahamas Heart Association, aims to pro-actively educate and inform persons residing in The Bahamas about heart care and how to lead heart healthy lifestyles.

The Heart Foundation is a non-profit organisation established in 1961 by Lady Evelyn Sassoon to assist persons in need, with heart care.

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GROUPS JOIN COMMUNITY GARDENING SCHEME

By **GLADSTONE THURSTON**
Bahamas Information
Services

NEW Providence’s Urban Renewal Centres, primary schools and youth clubs have joined in the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources’ community gardening initiative.

They will identify and provide growing spaces and staff for the supervision of projects where necessary.

The Ministry will provide technical assistance, tools, soils, seeds and fertilisers.

St George’s Anglican Church on Montrose Avenue and Claridge Farms on Cowpen Road will provide land space.

The community gardening initiative complements the backyard garden and schools gardens programmes.

“Since their beginning they have been most successful in promoting well being, generating an interest in food produc-

tion, and developing skills and knowledge in growing food,” said Minister Larry Cartwright.

As the Bahamas imports an average of \$500 million worth of food annually, said Mr Cartwright. “It is anticipated that these combined initiatives will also serve to reduce the level of imports.”

The community gardening initiative seeks to: empower persons to supplement their food supplies; encourage self reliance; stimulate social cohesion; promote and develop gardening skills; beautify and enhance the natural environment of neighborhoods; reduce importation of certain foods and provide physical activities for persons.

Realising that the success of community gardening require the involvement of the volunteer sector, Mr Cartwright said representatives of schools and civic organisations have been invited to formulate a programme toward that end.

APD Limited

APD Limited is seeking Design/Build proposals from suitably qualified design/build vendors for the provision of a fire sprinkler system to the Break Bulk Terminal situated on Arawak Cay.

The Request for Proposals in this connection will be available at the offices of APD Limited, Arawak Cay from Tuesday 7th February, 2012.

Responses to the Request for Proposals must be provided by Tuesday 14th February, 2012.

Please be advised that only Bahamian registered firms will be considered.

LOCAL NEWS



SCHOOL GIVEN MORE THAN 500 NEW BOOKS

MORE than 500 new books were recently donated to Sandilands Primary School through the Royal Society of St George.

Judy Ansell-Grindrod, president of the Society, said it was her mother's wish that after her death, in lieu of flowers, she would like a book fund to be set up for her daughter's "adopted" school, Sandilands Primary in Fox Hill.

The books were received by Donna Brown, the school's principal and Ms Forbes, coordinator of the Sandilands' literacy programme.

Mrs Ansell-Grindrod said

the Royal Society of St George is committed to helping students in The Bahamas.

"We like to demonstrate how we can make a difference in supporting the education of our children. Reading opens the door to all knowledge and everyone of us can participate in making quality education the top priority in our community."

Handing over the books to Mrs Brown (left), Ms Forbes and the students were Colin Jones, vice-president of the Society (centre), Sally Jones, committee member, and Mrs Ansell-Grindrod (far right).

NASA gives chance to Bahamians

TWO Bahamian students can apply for the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to spend a summer at NASA this year.

Eight-week summer internships are being offered for two qualifying students to work at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. This programme is presented through the Alf Thompson Memorial Scholarship (ATMS).

Successful applicants will work with research scientists and engineers from academia, NASA and corporations in the fields of aeronautical studies, biological sciences and/or space-related technology.

The internships are being offered to motivated students "in good standing", between the ages of 18 and 23.

Scholarship recipients must be enrolled in a recognised college or high school; exceptions may be granted for those within one year of such enrolment.

Special consideration will be given to students of limited financial means and to those schooled within the Bahamian education system.

Funds will be awarded to cover housing, food and transportation (including round-trip air fare) during the eight-week stay in Florida.

The Alf Thompson Memorial Scholarship was initiated in 2011 to honour the passing of Alf Thompson on November 16, 2010, a Bahamian trained in engineering and the sciences.

Its aim is to provide Bahamian students the opportunity to experience hands-on research at the Kennedy Space Center in the fields of aeronautical engineering, space-related technology, biological sciences or other similar disciplines.

The first ATMS award enabled a student from Barretarre, Exuma, Vardo McKenzie, to intern at NASA.

Initial funding for the scholarship came from donations to the Bahamas Marine Eco-Centre (BME, formerly the Danguillecourt Project) in memory of Alf Thompson.

Vardo said for him the internship was life-changing.

"When I got accepted as an intern for NASA, I knew I had been given a great opportunity, but the actual intern-



LAST year's ATMS scholarship winner Vardo McKenzie pictured at the Kennedy Space Centre and, right, making a leak detector during his internship with NASA.

ship experience was so much more rewarding than I could possibly have expected," he said.

The hands-on training with researchers, scientists and engineers encouraged Vardo to attend college and pursue studies in engineering.

"Not only have I had the opportunity to participate as an intern, but I have been able to build relationships with top-level scientists and researchers in the field of space sciences and engineering," he said.

"I would highly recommend this programme to other Bahamian students looking to expand their experiences in scientific research."

A BME spokesperson said that the success of the first year's ATMS internship with Vardo prompted them to continue, making it an annual opportunity for Bahamian students.

As a result, BME, a non-profit organisation promoting



awareness and respect for the Bahamian environment, is now offering not one, but two scholarships for this summer.

Anyone interested in the ATMS programme, wishing to donate towards it or get a copy of the scholarship application and accompanying information should contact the BME office at telephone number 324-7060 or email info@tropicbirds.org.

The deadline for application submissions is February 28. Announcement of awards will be made on April 15.

HIGH-POWERED WEAPON FOUND

BY DENISE MAYCOCK
Tribune Freeport Reporter
dmaycock@tribunemedia.net

FREPORT – A high-powered automatic weapon with ammunition was discovered in the Freeport area over the weekend, police reported.

Officers of the Drug Enforcement Unit made the discovery shortly before

5pm on Saturday in the vicinity of Adventurer's Way.

No arrests were made and investigations are continuing into the matter.

Traffic violators

More than 20 persons were cited for traffic violations during a road check exercise in West Grand Bahama over the

weekend.

Eight Mile Rock Police conducted checks around 6am on Friday at Queens Highway, near the Holmes Rock Primary School.

About 24 persons were ticketed for various traffic offences.

The road check exercise was the second conducted in the West Grand Bahama area.



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LOCAL NEWS



MEMBERS of Speed Week Revival 2011 present Governor General Sir Arthur Foulkes with a \$42,000 cheque which will benefit several charities including Teen Challenge, Ranfurly Homes for Children and the Cancer Society. Pictured from left: Tim Munnings, Director of Sports, Ministry of Youth, Sports & Culture; Tyrone Sawyer, Sports Tourism, Ministry of Tourism; David McLaughlin, Bahamas Speed Week Revival; Alexander Roberts, Director, Ranfurly Homes for Children; Andre Chappell, Teen Challenge; Wendell Barry, Cancer Society of The Bahamas; Camille Lady Barnett, AIDS Foundation; Diane Phillips, DP&A; Brendan Foulkes, Bahamas Speed Week. Back row, Craig Eldon, DP&A, Rosamund Roberts, Bahamas Speed Week Revival. Front row: Jimmie Lowe, President, Bahamas Speed Week Revival; Sir Arthur, Patron of the Gala Ball and Auction; Eric Fox, Teen Challenge; and Jeremy Stuby, Vice President, Pictet Bank & Trust, which sponsored the Gala Ball. Photo: Derek Smith/BIS

Speed Week helps charities

TWO months after Bahamas Speed Week Revival brought more than 40 classic and modern racing cars to Nassau from around the world, the organisation is presenting four local charities with a donation raised at the

gala banquet and auction of promises sponsored by Pictet Bank & Trust.

"We are delighted to have contributed to such a successful event," stated Yves Lourdin, managing director of Pictet Bank & Trust.

"We hope that the auction of promises will serve as a catalyst for similar events in the future that encourage persons to contribute significantly to various local charities."

News of the donation was unveiled at a press conference

and cheque presentation at Government House in the presence of Sir Arthur Foulkes, Governor General who served as patron of the gala ball and auction of promises. Also present were representatives from Speed Week and the benefitting charities.

"We gratefully thank

Bahamas Speed Week Revival for its generous support in assisting Teen Challenge Bahamas to continue empowering the youth of The Bahamas to reach their full God-given potential," said Andre Chappelle, of Teen Challenge Bahamas.

The Cancer Society, Ranfurly Homes for Children,

Teen Challenge and the Bahamas AIDS Foundation are each receiving \$10,500 from the funds raised at the auction.

"We are most grateful for the thoughtfulness of the Bahamas Speed Week Revival team," stated Wendell Barry, of the Cancer Society of The Bahamas.

Statement

Press Statement:

Nassau, 27 January 2012

APD Limited ("APD" or "the Company"), issues the following statement in relation to its Initial Public Offering "IPO" of shares and in response to comments regarding provisions to allow minority shareholders to vote on the selection of directors

APD Limited has and will continue to comply with the laws of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas and the listing rules of the Bahamas International Exchange (BISX). The Securities Industry Act and BISX rules require that a public company or issuer comply with provision of the Act related to governance. These provisions provide for among other requirements for the composition, qualification and independence of its board. The directors of APD will determine how best to comply with these provisions and make any necessary changes to the Company's articles in order to satisfy all laws, regulations and rules mandated by securities legislations.

The board of directors will undertake any required amendment to the Company's articles prior to the Company's next AGM when the directors for the financial year beginning July 1, 2012 will be nominated and elected.

James Mosko
Chairman
APD Limited

FIRST BAHAMIAN TO JOIN LAWYER PILOTS GROUP

LLEWELLYN Boyer-Cartwright, a 29-year veteran of the aviation industry who specialises in aviation law, this month became the first Bahamian to be admitted to the Lawyer Pilots Bar Association, an international organisation dedicated to airline and aircraft safety and legal issues surrounding the aviation industry.

"This is not only a personal honour for me, but an opportunity for The Bahamas to participate in a meaningful way to the growing body of aviation law governing an industry critical to our economy," said Mr Boyer-Cartwright, a senior associate with the Callenders & Co law firm.

"Most of us think of aviation only when we are making travel plans. We voice our frustration about paying for extras or delayed departures, or our pleasure at on-time arrivals. We do not stop to think about everything that went into making that flight among thousands a day even possible, not the engineering of the aircraft but the engineering, so to speak, of the rules governing the sky and operations on the ground even before an aircraft leaves the gate.

"In conjunction with ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation), there is an increasing body of law that strives to ensure safety in the skies and on the ground, regulates airports, sets parameters for flight and pilot standards, air worthiness of aircraft, manages the framework for currency exchanges between airlines criss-crossing continents, looks at every aspect of insurability, responsibility and liability in addition to matters like aircraft registries. It's the law that, figuratively speaking, keeps the airline industry – commercial, corporate and private – grounded in the finest sense of the word," he said.



LLEWELLYN Boyer-Cartwright.

Photo: Roland Rose

Mr Boyer-Cartwright, a pilot who flew for Bahamasair among other carriers for some 15 years, went to law school before going back to flying, and then returning to graduate school to be formally trained in the discipline that had been his passion. These days, Mr Boyer-Cartwright strives to land more airline business for The Bahamas, including a major carrier whose name he said he cannot disclose at this time.

"It is good business for this country in more ways than one," he said. "And while this particular airline does not serve The Bahamas at this time, we hope that will change. It is important for us to create the best possible environment to attract more airlift and to satisfy the evolving requirements of high net worth individuals who wish

to register their private aircraft offshore. In the past, The Bahamas has focused on resorts, attractions, excursions, the tourism offerings or product once visitors arrive. We have started to take seriously the steps of what we can do to show friendly skies long before the routes are finalised and I am proud that Callenders & Co is contributing to that effort."

Mr Boyer-Cartwright was admitted to the Bars of England and Wales and The Bahamas in 1994 and holds a Master's Degree in Aviation Science, having studied Airport Planning and Design and Aviation Safety. He also holds an Airline Transport Pilots Licence and Flight Engineers Licence and has flown the Boeing 727, Boeing 737 and is type-rated on the Boeing 747.

Without leadership, nothing gets done

Commentary by the Free National Movement

THE reason that the Opposition was rejected at the polls after a single term cannot be clearer. There was no leadership. The Christie administration was the weakest, most incompetent and most unproductive government in an independent Bahamas.

The scandals that rocked the Christie government, its late-again work ethic, its lack of significant accomplishments, and its endless list of broken promises all boiled down to a lack of vision, direction and strong leadership by Perry Christie.

In 2009, a senior PLP who sat in Mr Christie's cabinet said of that government: "Many PLPs were dissatisfied with our work ethic: our inability to get things done on time, answer phone calls and get to work on time and to deal with requests to the government in a timely fashion."

Nothing has changed. Mr Christie is incapable of being

a strong and decisive leader. Again, the words of that same senior PLP: "The public expects to see a full-time Leader of the Opposition with regular and known office hours..."

Whether in government or in opposition, Mr Christie is incapable of being a well-organised leader who can deal with matters in a timely fashion.

Cassius Stuart, the FNM's standard bearer for Bamboo Town recently noted that when he was considering whether to join the FNM or PLP that it took eight months for Mr Christie to get back to him. Prime Minister Ingraham returned his call in an

hour. Mr Christie is a talker, not a doer; a promise-maker, not a deliverer; a vacillator, not a leader.

Weeks before the 2002 general election, Mr Christie proclaimed: "I see thousands of school children in overcrowded classrooms being taught by frustrated underpaid teachers." Yet in five years, he could not and did not build a single school.

Mr Christie also proclaimed: "I see too many families who still have to fry fish and conch-fritters out on Montagu Bay to raise money for major surgery because there is no National Health Insurance System to help them out."

Yet he did not deliver on what he boasted was his most urgent priority.

It is a re-elected FNM Government that will deliver catastrophic health insurance, expand the prescription drug benefit to all workers and their families, and continue to transform health care facilities and technology.

Mr Christie further proclaimed: "We must conduct ourselves in Government according to an uncompromising code of complete integrity and transparency. If we set the right example at the top, it will filter all the way down to the bottom, both in the public sector and in the wider society."

Despite this pledge, he tolerated scandalous and unseemly behaviour in his cabinet and government. He also kept secret, agreements on Baha Mar; Park Ridge Securities Corp (Albany); Bluewater, the phantom company that sought to take control of BTC; and a number of

others. Given another chance, Mr Christie will again prove to be a laid-back, indecisive, weak and disorganised figure head of the PLP, while his associates do whatever they want. Tough issues, like battling crime and boosting job-creation do not solve themselves. They require tough, focused, organized and strong leadership.

A Christie administration that was drenched in scandal by many of the same people who are running again will not have the credibility or authority to deal with crime. It would be like hiring a known safe-breaker to guard your safe, and also giving him the combination for the safe.

The Great Recession that struck the world and The Bahamas beginning in 2008 required quick, decisive and bold action. Such action, led by Prime Minister Ingraham prevented the collapse of the economy, saved the jobs of civil servants, advanced mea-

asures to assist those in need of emergency and public assistance, and helped to prepare The Bahamas for a recovery.

Times of crisis demand leadership. The Christie administration, a failure in better global economic times, would have been a disaster during the Great Recession. Like scores of countries throughout the world, the acceleration of infrastructural projects at home prevented economic collapse by stimulating the economy and providing jobs and pay cheques.

The Opposition has criticized these projects, the very things that employed Bahamian workers and has improved the lives of every single Bahamian. Clearly, they would have failed to do the many things that are now benefiting the Bahamian people because from 2002 to 2007 the Christie administration proved to be incapable and indifferent when it came to delivering for the Bahamian people.

600 child abuse cases in a year

from page one

Penn Centre for boys, Mrs Butler-Turner said that 14 boys managed to escape between June 1 and October 26, 2011.

She said that trying to stop escapees is difficult.

"The Simpson Penn Centre is not a facility where persons are physically confined on an almost 24-hour basis, hence the prevention of abscondments is literally impossible," she said.

"In addition to the engagement of additional persons, the staff have been instructed to be more vigilant in the supervision of residents."

The population increase at Simpson Penn, as a result of the Act, has called for two security officers to be hired last November, and the centre is currently "in the process of identifying additional persons for engagement."

Mrs Butler-Turner said: "While there has been an increase in the number of residents since the coming into force of the Child Protection Act, there is a fluctuation in the number of residents on an almost weekly basis due to the status of the

court cases."

In response to a question concerning a girl who twice went missing from a facility in Grand Bahama in 2009, she stated there are "established procedures" for the search and recovery of children who go missing "in the care of the minister."

These procedures include immediately notifying police, forwarding reports to the permanent secretary of the department to alert the minister, contacting the relatives of the child, and the department's own investigations to locate and recovery of the missing child.

Mrs Butler-Turner pointed out the girl, in question, is of legal age since 2010 and contact was made with the girl's father.

She also noted, yesterday, that provisions have been made in the 2011-2012 budget to increase additional staff and the Department of Public Service is currently processing 10 applications for social workers.

Social workers deal with anywhere between 30 to 600 cases, though it depends on location, area and type of requested service, Mrs Butler-Turner said.



DNA CANDIDATE Rodney Moncur and a supporter repair the back entrance of his office in Bain and Grants Town after it was taken off its hinges by thieves. Photo: Felipe Major/Tribune Staff

BREAK-IN AT DNA OFFICE

from page one

took a screwdriver and unscrewed the door. They entered and took a brand new Dell computer that was recently purchased."

He said this incident means

that his party will have to increase security measures.

"It is extremely annoying that security was compromised in such a manner. We will definitely have to beef up security," he said.

Police are investigating.

WEAR AND TEAR OF RESPONDING TO 911 CALLS

from page one

Mr Brown said in the statement that the PHA's ambulances, which began to break down one after the other last week, had not been able to get the scheduled maintenance they needed because of the increased emergency calls related mostly to crime.

"Emergency vehicles at Public Hospitals Authority have been under considerable strain as a result of a significant increase in trauma - most of which are related to crime," the PHA's statement said.

According to the statement, increased emergency calls have also affected the PHA's Routine Repair and Maintenance Programme.

"Our goal was to have each vehicle brought in for a routine maintenance check every 300 - 400 hours/or every two weeks. We have not been able to do that at this time because of the high demand in emergency cases."

Last Thursday, it took two ambulances to get a man to the emergency room after the first responding ambulance broke down on the way to hospital.

Mr Brown said funding has been approved for five new ambulances at a cost of \$72,000 per vehicle. He said when the vehicles arrive they will have cost the PHA \$124,000.

EMS workers who are dissatisfied with how the EMS

department is being run complained to *The Tribune* that the ambulances bought for the public EMS services were cheap and not fit for the pitted Nassau roads.

However, Mr Brown said in the PHA's statement that ambulances are purchased from "one of the most reputable companies in the hemisphere" and that each one is "custom made and outfitted specifically for conditions here in The Bahamas".

The money for the five new ambulances will be contained within the government's 2012/2013 budget, according to Mr Brown.

EMS workers also alleged that the companies hired to carry out maintenance on the PHA's ambulances do not have the knowledge to properly overhaul the vehicles.

Mr Brown said in the PHA's statement that he and EMS manager Alvery Hanna are satisfied that the three companies hired to maintain the ambulances will be able to address the maintenance problems that befall the vehicles.

He added that "Emergency Vehicle Operations Training" will continue for EMS personnel "in order to improve response times in emergency cases".

"We want to make it clear that service is our first priority, and in the coming months the public will see us deliver on that," Mr Brown said.

CUT IN WORK PERMITS TO HELP BAHAMIANS

from page one

"We are not issuing permits to foreigners for jobs Bahamians can do. The department has tightened its level of scrutiny on work permit applications and as a consequence 2,299 fewer permits were issued in 2011 than in 2010. Another reason for the decrease is a lot of the companies that were in the Bahamas are no longer here so their employees went with them. To say the economic downturn is the only reason is not entirely correct but it is one of the main reasons."

Of the 7,091 work permits issued last year 53 per cent or 3,793 were given to housekeepers and handymen - 1,671 and 2,122 respectively.

Mr Symonette said the reason for the high numbers is because Bahamians simply "don't want the jobs."

"More than half of the work permits went to non-skilled labour. Bahamians complain about the number of work permits we issue and the unemployment rate however they refuse to do the jobs. They think its menial and beneath them and they just won't do it. Well, you can't have your cake and eat it too," he said.

"A lot of Bahamian households have Jamaican maids and because Bahamian women rather apply to work in the hotel as housekeepers

than in a home. Then you have a large category of Peruvian and Filipino live ins. These people require work permits. You have a large number of Haitian gardeners. I know one man who has had his work permit renewed 20 times because Bahamians just won't do the work."

Work permits for construction workers decreased by 53 per cent, from 565 in 2010 to 291 in 2011. Farm labourers also decreased significantly from 549 to 441. In fact, of the 24 categories of jobs that foreigners were granted work permits in 2011 all but eight saw decreases compared to the same period in 2010.

The categories where increases were seen are listed as follows:

- Cooks: 141 - 145
- Consultants: 51 - 89
- Guest Organisers: 49 - 64
- Maintenance Men: 49 - 59
- Presidents: 0 - 3
- Projects Managers: 43 - 57
- Surveyors: 25-31
- Attorneys: 0 - 4

Mr Symonette said the government expects more declines in the issuance of voters cards with the introduction of the new training programme, which is designed to provide more Bahamians with skills for jobs now being done by non Bahamians.

Of the 7,091 work permits issued last year, 5,958 were issued on new tamper proof, electronic cards.



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LOCAL NEWS

Why the hold-up in turning college into a university?



RECENTLY, I caught the tail-end of a polite rant on JCN-TV by College of the Bahamas professor Nicolette Bethel. She was lamenting the fact that the College's move towards university status has stalled, threatening dire consequences for the future of the country.

My first reaction was: Well, aren't we already part of the University of the West Indies?

We are indeed – have been since 1964, in fact. And we contribute about \$3 million a year to this prestigious regional institution, which operates a School of Clinical Medicine and Research, a Hotel Management Programme and an Open University "campus" in Nassau.

My second reaction was: Why does the College need to become a university anyway?

"The concept of a university is a place where ideas are encouraged, where economies are expanded, where industries are created, where jobs are multiplied," Bethel explained to me.

"If the country does not show confidence in itself, in its young, in its own ability to innovate, the moment will pass. Our lack of understanding of this is a recipe for future disaster."

And apparently it's all part of the plan – the 2009-2019 strategic plan, which says the College "expects to become a university... to develop new undergraduate and graduate programmes, increase research and innovation activities and focus its work in

areas crucial to national development".

In his introduction to that plan, Council Chairman T Baswell Donaldson says a university will "support and drive national development (and) the College is ready to take that step". He told me the same thing over the phone recently: "We are ready at any time to become a university, but I have no idea what the government's timetable is."

A rather startling admission. But before we get into a discussion of that, a little background is in order.

Prior to 1974, higher education in the Bahamas was limited to basic training for teachers and tradesmen, plus the link to UWI. In that year, the government combined its teacher training facilities with a technical school and the Government High sixth form to create the College of the Bahamas.

The amalgamation was recommended by UWI professor Dr C T Leys, and was based on the need for greater efficiencies in building a better educated work force. For the first time, ordinary Bahamians could receive a tertiary education without leaving the country – and UWI had a local base for its extra-mural programmes.

The College was established to be a "multi-purpose institution serving, as far as possible, every important need of The Bahamas".

Initially, it offered technical and professional courses, as well as pre-university academic programmes on an



open entry basis (although that policy was abandoned in 1978 for cost reasons).

Back then, the College was little more than a division of the Ministry of Education, with "tightly controlled governance reflecting the context of the period".

Financial matters were under the full control of the minister, who could direct the governing council as he saw fit. It was not until the early 1990s that the concept of an autonomous Bahamian university began to form.

A 1993 study laid the groundwork for the launch of four-year degree programmes.

"Overall, a bachelor degree-awarding institution can expect to associate directly with universities... on a more equitable basis, and to benefit accordingly," the study committee reported. "It should be a matter of pride to recognise the College as an institution of university status."

The following year, the National Task Force on Education (headed by the late Dr Keve Bethel) called explicitly for the COB's conversion into a university college that would focus on granting

degrees and conducting research.

This led to a new COB act in 1995, which gave the College significant control over planning, budgeting, hiring and firing. Since then the College has been funded by a block grant from the government (plus tuition fees and donations), and the only position requiring ministerial approval is that of the president.

The next step was to gain international recognition and accreditation. This required upgrading faculty credentials and reforming policies and procedures so that, today, the College's credits are accepted by more than 200 institutions around the world, and about a third of the faculty have doctoral degrees.

In 2002, the incoming PLP administration declared that the College would become a university by 2007, and a range of planning initiatives was launched. In 2005, a new internal review set the stage for a massive private sector fundraising campaign to support infrastructural development.

Former Education Minister Alfred Sears told me his administration had set a roadmap for the move to university status: "It was our view that the College should become a centre of teaching excellence attracting foreign students, that it should be able to conduct research into all aspects of Bahamian life, and that it should be in a position to provide advisory services on key national development issues."

Major investments in new facilities took place during this period, including a library and information centre, a performing arts centre, administrative offices and a modern bookstore. And Dr Keve Bethel was able to report that "by the middle of 2006, the process had reached a point where serious consideration could be given to the drafting of the new legislation necessary to establish formally the University of The Bahamas".

But that was still the case in 2010. Shortly before her death (in February 2011), Dr Bethel said the College was "well on the way in terms of administration and infrastructure to establish a university; however, there is a need for the development of a new act in order to transition to full university status".

Under the 1995 legislation, the governing council's 11 members are appointed by the governor-general, and include the president, a student, a professor, an alumnus, and five others representing various sectors of the community. Council members and the chairman are all appointed by the governor-general.

The current state of play was outlined by Education Minister Desmond Bannister in his last budget address. About half of the College's 5,000 students are full-time, taught by 219 faculty members. And more students are now working towards four-year bachelor degrees, he said, than two-year associate degrees.

The first graduate programme – a master of business – was launched in 2010, followed by a master of science and a master of education. The College also administers the UWI law programme. A new campus was opened recently on Grand Bahama and a \$10 million science complex is planned for New Providence, along with a \$4 million graduate business centre.

So what's the bottom line here? Four-year degrees, relative autonomy, graduate programmes, international

accreditation, research facilities, highly qualified professors – it seems clear that the College is already a university in all but name.

But Nicolette Bethel wonders why "we still have leaders who quibble about, who even actively oppose, the creation of a university out of the College of The Bahamas. We are still using the phrase 'transition to university status' almost 20 years after we began the process. For how many more generations will this transition extend?"

Good question, I thought. So I asked Education Minister Desmond Bannister for an explanation. He told me the government remains "fully committed" to the transition to university status.

"Graduate programmes were the last major criteria. The next step is for legislation to be drafted and stakeholder consultation to take place. We seek to be both methodical and inclusive in this process, but there is no timetable.

"The government sees no magic in rushing the process and coming up with flawed legislation just to say that we did it."

However, in 2007, Dr Keve Bethel, the College's president emerita, had produced a 45-page report on governance that covered all the bases. She led a committee of 25 experts from both the public and private sectors who reviewed international practices, conducted a score of interviews, and held three major stakeholder consultations over a period of many months.

That committee issued comprehensive recommendations for new legislation to transform the College into a university, including a new governing council that would have "final authority over all affairs of the university".

In her report, Dr Bethel said a university would "stimulate greater critical, creative and innovative thinking that could be of significant national value... provide a space for divergent views, demonstrate tolerance for diversity, and be free of political bias".

According to outspoken COB professor Ian Strachan, a university is a no-brainer: "We need a university that can serve as an engine for development; that can fill the gaps in so many areas of our national life; a university that improves the methods by which we educate and govern ourselves, do business, protect and conserve our environment and our resources, and address social and cultural problems. It has the potential to almost single-handedly improve the Bahamian way of life."

This sounds very much like what other leading edge commentators are saying around the world. Author Thomas Friedman, for example, has written that cities combining a university, an educated populace, a dynamic business community and the fastest broadband connections available will be the success stories and job factories of the 21st century – intellectual ecosystems, they are called.

Currently, the government finances COB to the tune of almost \$25 million a year (compared to less than \$20 million under the last PLP administration).

Added to this is revenue from tuition fees and private donors like the Lyford Cay Foundation and major commercial banks.

The College's strategic plan calls for some \$55 million in new public and private fund-

ing to build a training hotel, a student centre, athletic facilities, a research centre in Andros, and a science and technology complex, among other projects.

So, like ZNS, the lion's share of COB's budget is a government subvention allocated yearly, and the president and council chairman are essentially political appointments (as is the governor-general himself). And although the 1995 legislation makes the College responsible for its own finances, it's a safe bet that most decisions are made in a political context, even if there is no overt interference.

As Professor Strachan put it: "The Ministry of Finance (which means the PM) decides what we get and don't get. Tuition increases, for example, have political impact. The instinct of those who would decide this at COB is to ask for permission, not forgiveness. There would be no forgiveness. They know this instinctively. Such a raise, were it advanced by the president would not be approved by the chairman unless he first got the OK of his boss (the PM)."

But according to one former faculty member, the College is its own worst enemy in this regard. "There's no need for an act to change the name. Why are they so afraid of what the government will say or do? Why don't they just go ahead? All governments have delayed, so just go ahead. They are a university in everything but name anyway."

"If we had done what government told us to do in the early days, there wouldn't even be a College today. We were supposed to be an A-level institution originally, and when we started offering associate degrees we were instructed by the Cabinet secretary to 'cease and desist immediately'. But we went ahead and did what we thought we should do – and that was under the original act."

Former Education Minister Alfred Sears (who will not be running in the next election) also acknowledged that the political process is too partisan.

"We need a stronger civil society voice so that the politicians can't dominate the conversation," he told me. "There must be more structural collaboration so that the views of civil society are taken fully into account."

An autonomous university would be a big step to achieving such a counterweight to political inertia (and I suspect that's the real issue here). It is certainly worth noting that I was unable to obtain a copy of the College's statutory annual report to help me research this article, and the new president – Dr Betsy Vogel Boze – declined to respond to, or even acknowledge, my inquiries, although she would obviously be a key player in any transformation process. One has to ask "why?"

In a recent *Tribune* article, financial advisor Richard Coulson argued that the College should become the hub of our development efforts: "With proper stimulus, it can act as the intellectual driver of the country. Its magnificent new Harry Moore Library now provides a physical nexus around which satellite centres of learning can be added, in many disciplines from sciences to the humanities. This can lead to new manufacturing and service industries."

Or, as Nicolette Bethel put it: "We invest in all sorts of nonsense that fades away in short order – after, indeed, the next election. In my perfect Bahamas, we would invest in our brains. We have a real shortage of bright ideas. And universities generate ideas."

It seems clear from this review that all the necessary preparatory work to turn the College into a university has been completed, and all parties concerned appreciate the benefits. So what's the hold-up? This is hardly a tough call.

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

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LOCAL NEWS

Opportunity knocks for students

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STUDENTS listen as Minister of Education Desmond Bannister gives a speech during the official opening of the annual Exhibition and Career Symposium held at the Kendal Isaacs Gymnasium on Wednesday, February 1.
Photos: **Raymond Bethel/BIS**

By **BETTY VEDRINE**
Bahamas Information Services

HUNDREDS of students were given insights into the technical and vocational opportunities available to them.

Students from several schools across New Providence participated in the annual Exhibition and Career Symposium held by the Department of Education at the Kendal Isaacs Gymnasium on Wednesday, February 1.

Minister of Education Desmond Bannister officially opened the event. Applauding the efforts of the staff in the Career and Technical Education Section of the Ministry of Education and the Association for Career and Technical Education for staging the event, Mr Bannister said that partnerships like these are needed to ensure students are exposed to a cross-section of careers.

"Technological changes occur rapidly, therefore it is imperative for our students to be highly trained and remain on the cutting edge," he said. "For this to happen, our educational system must provide programmes that prepare students to readily embrace potential opportunities in industry and tertiary

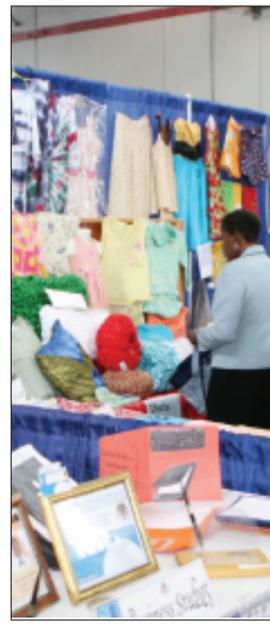


MINISTER of Education Desmond Bannister speaks to students during the annual Exhibition and Career Symposium.

Initially, the fair provided

exposure to the technical fields and was previously held at the Town Centre or Marathon Malls. As support grew over the years, the exhibition was transferred to the Kendal Isaacs Gymnasium where it has been held since.

Among the exhibitors and partners for this year's events were: the Bahamas Technical and Vocational Institute (BTVI); Lincoln College of Technology; New England Institute of Technology; National Aviation Academy; Coral Ridge Training School; Ministry of Public Works and Utilities; the Water and Sewerage Corporation; the Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas; the Royal Bahamas Defence Force; Lowe's Wholesale Drug Agency Ltd; Bahamas Hot Rod Association; Synergy Bahamas; the College of The Bahamas; the Bahamas Hotel Association; the Bahamas Baptist Community College; Lignum Technologies, and the Department and Ministry of Education.



VARIOUS exhibitors participated in the annual Exhibition and Career Symposium held at the Kendal Isaacs Gymnasium on Wednesday, February 1.

DEATH NOTICE

Lillian Mavis Sands

Members of the Cherokee Sound, Abaco, community were saddened by the death of Lillian "Mavis" Sands. Following a lengthy illness, Mavis Sands, 75, passed away peacefully at her home in Cherokee Sound on Friday, January 13, 2012 at 10:00 a.m., surrounded by her loved ones.

Funeral services took place on Sunday, January 15, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. at the Assemblies of God Church, Cherokee Sound, Abaco. Officiating was Rev. Robert Cornea, assisted by Pastor Deion Gibson. Interment followed in the Public Cemetery, Cherokee Sound, Abaco.

Left to cherish many joyful and happy memories are:- Beloved husband William B. Sands, Sr.; Sons: William B. Sands, Jr. and Royce Sands; Daughters: Jacqueline 'Jackie' Albury, Laurel Pinder and Beth Nace; Sons-In-Law: Roger Pinder and Gary Nace; Daughters-In-Law: Felicie 'Fay' Sands and Martha Sands;

Grandchildren: Darrell Pinder (wife Kelli), William Pinder, Justine Stammer (husband Alex), Raine and Royce 'RJ' Sands, Jr., Paul Nace and Yvette Shamoun (husband Steven); Great Grandchildren: Emily and Isabella Shamoun and Nicholas and Christian Pinder; Sister: Carolyn Charge; Brothers: Noel and Brady Lowe; Sisters-in-Law: Elizabeth Lowe, Louise Lowe, Bernadetta Lowe and Flora Lowe; Brother-in-Law: Alan Charge; Nephews: Michael Hurrell, Douglas Lowe, Gordon Lowe, Christopher Lowe, James Lowe, Scott Lowe, Greg Lowe, Jarad Lowe, Mickey Lowe, Craig Sands, Percy Sands, Ivan Sands, Thomas Malone, George Malone; Nieces: Lou Ann Johnson, Denise Saggarr, Michelle Spear, Melonie Lowe, Heather Lowe, Rosey Lowe, Thelma Pinder, Blanch Thompson, Iva Pinder, Gloria Hanna, Pauline North and Elsie Mae Carroll.

Other special friends including: Peggy Albury, Marie Sands, Barbara, Andrew, Bonnie and Margaret Malone, Margaret Fox, Veronica Saunders, Jeff Key, Rev. Bob and Phyllis Cornea, Luiz and Ileana Fardjo, Sharon Bethel, Clarie and Gloria Lowe, Betty Albury, Katherine Albury, Betty and Steve Bethel, Francella Roberts and Family, Captain Mike Bowe, Lilly and Cleveland Malone, The Park's Family, Management and Staff of Commonwealth Bank Ltd., Management and Staff of National Marine, Assemblies of God Churches of The Bahamas, Members of Kirk of the Pines Presbyterian Church, Members of Marsh Harbour Gospel Chapel and other relatives and friends in the settlement of Cherokee Sound and across the island of Abaco. Very special thank you to Dr. Charite of the Integrated Medical Centre, Abaco for his numerous home visits. Our sincere appreciation to the Nursing staff of the Auskell Medical Clinic, Dr. Charles Rahming, Dr. Duane Sands, Dr. Dean Tseretopoulos, Dr. Koch and family, the Nursing staff at Doctor's Hospital, Nurse Era Burrows and her Homecare Nursing team. Extra special thanks to her caregivers Edna and Lilly.

We are lost without you. Our lives will never be the same. You will always be in our hearts.