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The Bahama Journal

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D'AGUILAR DEFENDS PORT PLANS

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

Following a rebuke from Shadow Minister of Transport Glennys Hanna-Martin, Tourism Minister Dionisio D'Aguiar claims that all proposals for the Prince George Wharf have significant Bahamian involvement, which he said is a huge factor for the Minnis Administration.

He says, "we must think that we can be exceptional, and I think that's what we're pushing for. What we have there is less than mediocre, and



▶ Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguiar (File photo)

■ See page 4...

Ground Breaking For \$250 Million PI Project

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK
 Journal Staff Writer

Branded as the new downtown Paradise Island, Sterling Hurricane Hole offers a unique live work

play lifestyle, as touted by Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis, who brought the keynote address at the official ground-breaking ceremony for the project.

The project's expected

to provide a \$250 million boost to the economy.

"It is projected to provide approximately 3,000 construction jobs over a five-year period and when completed, it will provide

500 full time and part time jobs," he said.

"The development of the 13-acre Hurricane Hole marina site encom-

■ See page 7...

Morton Salt Employees Plan To Strike

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas Industrial Manufacturers Union confirmed last Friday morning that they are gearing up to strike on

the grounds of discrimination.

This strike could possibly result in a halt being place on salt production.

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Gov't Receiving Bids On Grand Lucayan

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK
 Journal Staff Writer

The government of the Bahamas is seemingly making a little headway with its bid to get the

Grand Lucayan Resort off its hands.

According to Minister of Tourism, Dionisio D'Aguiar, it's hoped that the bids will be

■ See page 4...

Cat Island Traffic Fatality

BY LICEC BASTIAN
 Journal Staff Writer

An American male is the latest traffic fatality in The Bahamas, after he succumbed to his injuries

on Saturday following a traffic mishap on Cat Island.

According to Police, the man was driving a 2018 Sonyoung 125cc

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EDUCATION MINISTER HOSTS RECEPTION FOR BAHAMIAN STUDENTS IN UK



▶ LONDON, England --The Hon. Jeffrey Lloyd, Minister of Education, hosted a reception for Bahamian students from several universities in the United Kingdom at the Bahamas High Commission, 10 Chesterfield Street, Mayfair, on Saturday afternoon, January 26, 2019. In tweet on his Facebook page, His Excellency Ellison Greenslade, QPM, Bahamas High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland, described the event as "an enjoyable afternoon of fellowship and delicious Bahamian food." Minister Lloyd and Dr. Marcellus Taylor, Director of Education, were scheduled to return to The Bahamas over the weekend after participating in several education-related meetings in London. Minister Lloyd (center) -- flanked by High Commissioner Greenslade (left) and Dr. Taylor (right) -- is pictured with the group of students and several of other Bahamian diplomats in London.



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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

POACHERS AND MIGRANTS CHANGE STRATEGY

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Royal Bahamas Defense Force Commodore Tellis Bethel says that officers have to pay closer attention to the vessels crossing our waters as migrants and poachers are changing their means of transpiration.

Commodore Bethel said "The Defense Force continues to maintain a patrol in the Southern Bahamas, and of course, we would have had several incidents where we would have apprehended migrants."

This time of year, you have the cold fronts that come through, and they take advantage of the strong wind. Also, we've

realized for some time that they have been shifting the means of transport.

"They're using the more modern type of yachts. So, you have to be on the lookout for not just the regular wooden sloop, but modern sailing vessels as well," he said.

As for the poachers, Commodore Bethel told reporters last Wednesday that there seems to be an improvement following quite a number of apprehensions last year.

He said, "some reports that we're getting from the local fishing community is that there seems to be no interference with the Dominicans. However, we also note that they have also shift-

ed their means of poaching.

"What we have observed now, is that they're using smaller, go-fast type of vessels to fish near Inagua, and as close to the Dominican Republic; but we've had some success in apprehending them as well," he said.

The Commodore said that the RBDF is networking with local partner agencies like Immigration, as well as regional partners like the American Coast Guard.

This, he said, helps in terms of feeding information.

He added that he expects to accomplish much more in the coming months.



► Royal Bahamas Defense Force Commodore, Tellis Bethel (File photo)



MINISTRY OF FINANCE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND REVENUE REAL PROPERTY TAX NOTICE for 2019

In accordance with the Real Property Tax Act, Chapter 375 as amended, the Chief Valuation Officer hereby gives notice:-

- (a) that copies of the assessment lists are available as required by Section 7 subsection 7 of the Act, and may be inspected at the Office of the Chief Valuation Officer;
- (b) that a notice of assessment addressed to each owner of property liable to tax under the Real Property Tax Act is available at the Valuation Office, located at rear of the shops at Carmichael Plaza, Carmichael Road and may be collected therefrom by or on behalf of the owner of such property during normal working hours;
- (c) that pursuant to subsection (3) of Section 7 of the Act, upon the expiration of five days after the publication of this notice, a notice of assessment shall be deemed to have been served on every owner of property liable to tax under the Act;
- (d) that without prejudice to the provision of subsection (3) of Section 7 of the Act, the Chief Valuation Officer may at any time after the publication in the Gazette of this notice send by post, a notice of assessment addressed to any owner of property liable to tax under the Act;
- (e) that pursuant to Section 11(1) of the Act, any person aggrieved by a notice of assessment deemed to have been served under this Act may object thereto by serving on the Chief Valuation Officer within thirty days after the date on which the notice of assessment is deemed to have been served, a notice in writing of such objection stating the grounds upon which he relies;
- (f) that pursuant to Section 18 of the Act, the tax is due and payable by the owners of property not later than sixty days after the date on which notice of assessment is deemed to have been served. Accordingly, it is the duty of each taxpayer to ensure that he receives a Notice of Assessment;
- (g) that the exemption has been allowed for 2019 on those which have been declared as owner-occupied residences, and have satisfied the conditions. However, under Section 43 of the Act, the owners are required to disclose to the Chief Valuation Officer any change in the circumstances which does not entitle the property for the exemption allowed;
- (h) that pursuant to Section 10 of the Act, every owner of property shall not later than the thirty-first day of December in each year, make to the Chief Valuation Officer in the prescribed form a return of such particulars of that property as may be prescribed, for the purpose of enabling that Officer to compile and maintain accurate assessment lists, and such owner shall declare to the correctness of such return before an authorized person.

(For) Controller of Inland Revenue/
Chief Valuation Officer

West Bay Street Road Rehabilitation Project

Important Notice

Traffic Diversion

West Bay Street between Blake Road and Tropical Gardens

Road will be closed to traffic on Thursday, January 24th

2019 between the hours of 9:30am and 8:00pm. The

motoring public is asked to adhere to all posted diversion

routes. Provisions will be made to accommodate all

necessary local traffic during the duration of the work.

We apologize for any inconvenience caused to the public during this period. For further information or assistance please contact any of the following:

Bill Simmons Construction & Heavy Equipment Co. Ltd -
Tel. 323-7920

Ministry of Public Works - Tel. 322-4830/1 or
Email - publicworks@bahamas.gov.bs

Water & Sewerage Corporation -
Tel. 302-5599 or Visit our Website - www.wsc.com.bs

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Gov't Got Full Revenue From Fyre Festival

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

According to Acting Customs Comptroller Dr. Geannine Moss, the government received every bit of the government's revenue from the failed Fyre Festival back in 2017.

Her comments come following the release of the jaw dropping Netflix documentary which left everyone wondering if the government got paid.

"As is required for any even coming into The Bahamas, typically the goods are imported under a temporary basis and so to do that we have to get deposits for goods that

would be returning as well as duty payment on goods that would be consumed during the festival.

"So, all the goods that came in like the water and all of that stuff, the duty were collected to the tune of some \$175,000 or so. The balance of the equipment did not leave.

"We had some businesses in the states who owned the equipment was able to come forward, pay the outstanding temporary import fee and those goods were returned," she said.

Dr. Moss said the majority of goods customs seized from the festival - like mattresses and tents - were auctioned off to

Exuma residents.

She added though that despite the fiasco, the documentary did not have a negative impact on the Customs department.

She opined that she was most disappointed in the Bahamian public who tore down the government and the customs officer that was mentioned in the documentary.

"Social media decided to cannibalize the officer and also the Member of Parliament, both current and former and I think that we go right back to the black crab syndrome of pulling one another down.

"I didn't hear anybody pulling down the docu-

mentary, or demonizing Netflix or Andy King or anybody else and I think that's what's wrong with our society.

"The officer in question is a veteran of some 34 years. He has served through many islands in The Bahamas; all the island persons know him very well and there has never been any kind of scandal on his professional or personal life," Dr. Moss said.

Despite the well publicized fiasco, the Customs Comptroller says the procedure for temporarily imported goods is an efficient one.

"The way that the goods come in, those pro-

ocols have been in place. I have been in customs for 29 years and I met them in place. It's a great check and balance and of course customs first priority is always the revenue.

"I'm revenue driven, I'm revenue based, I think revenue. So any exemptions or wavers would come from the Ministry of Finance or tourism to accommodate any event that's coming in.

"For any goods that are imported temporarily, there is a protocol in place which is law and is mandated."

"You can have an item come in here temporarily and apply. We'll expect you to put up a deposit to

cover the revenue in the event that the goods do not exit in The Bahamas or are misused for any purpose other than that which it was imported for," she said.

Fyre Festival was marketed as an exclusive luxury experience, but what attendees got was an entirely different experience - a remote island with little to no running water, electricity, or food.

Fyre Festival Co-Founder Billy McFarland was found guilty in a Manhattan court last year of defrauding investors of the festival and sentenced to six years in federal prison.

D'AGUILAR DEFENDS

Continued from / PAGE 1...

you need some significant capital to create something exceptional and iconic."

He added, "you don't want to put ten million dollars in here now and put 20 million in here later. You want to make a wow, and we want Bahamians to participate in all facets of it.

"We want them to participate in the management, ownership, and to

participate in the businesses that are down there. That's what I call Bahamian participation," he said.

According to the Minister, the previous administration raised around \$430 million to build a new airport. They then hired a foreign company to manage the airport.

When asked why this government could not fund the port's redevelopment in the same manner,

Mr. D'Aguilar said that its more difficult now to raise the amount of money wanted using a similar construct given the current market scenario.

He said, "the benefits and the interests that is being paid on the Lynden Pindling International Airport, most of it is going overseas."

He added, "the management of that is being paid to a foreign company. So, I would much prefer to have a scenario where

ownership of the concession is in the hands of Bahamians."

"They're getting the dividends; they're getting the interest—that's what I want. I want a port down there that expands the number of options for Bahamian entrepreneurs, make the number of businesses that are around the Port double and possible triple. I want there to be an orderly and easily acceptable transportation business down there,

because now its chaotic. There is so much more that we can do," he said.

Minister D'Aguilar said that the Port's evaluation committee is ready to select a bidder out of three submitted bids.

These bids come from Global Parts Holdings, a collective bid from several cruise companies with local Bahamian businessman Gerald Strachan and a group represented by Providence Advisors.

The committee headed

by Tourism Director General, Joy Jibrilu will make its recommendations to Cabinet, where the final decision will be made.

This redevelopment is an attempt to boost cruise ship visitor spending as 75 per cent of country's visitors flood Nassau's streets spending a mere 11 per cent.

Mr. D'Aguilar made his comments while appearing as a guest on the Love 97 Radio Programme Jones and Company.

Morton Salt Employees Plan To Strike

Continued from / PAGE 1...

According to union president, Jennifer Brown, negotiations for a new industrial contract have been ongoing for quite some time now with no favorable outcome.

In terms of a timeline, the union president informed this Journal that last February, the company offered the union a 1.5 per cent wage increase effective March 1 2018, another this March and a

1.7% increase in 2020.

However, the union returned with an increase of eight per cent over the three years.

Morton's counter proposal went up only slightly in the third year from 1.7 to 1.72 per cent. This, according to Ms. Brown is both unacceptable and discriminatory.

"It looks like that's the only thing they will understand. I mean and they are discriminating against the Inagua plant. At all the

other plants the wages highly exceed the Inagua employees.

"We are now trying to get what the other plants have been getting from 8 to 10 years ago and 10 years later, they think it's difficult or a problem to give it to the workers we feel it's just discrimination because of the color of our skin," she said.

Morton Salt has locations in places like Utah, Canada, Cape Canaveral and Maryland.

She added that other Morton Salt plants have unions to which managements work hand and hand with, but this she said is not done in Inagua.

The union - which has a membership of 84 - has been calling on the government to intervene and assist with the negotiating process, but according to Mrs. Brown, little has been done.

"The only thing they have done is arrange a date for us to meet. As far as to

say they intervened, nothing has been done. Even during the negotiations they just sit and listen," Ms. Brown said.

Trade Union Congress General Secretary Tyrone Morris said Morton Salt employees are being treated unfairly, because the government is allowing the unfair treatment to carry on.

"Whenever you have a weak government, this is how they allow others to come into your country

and take advantage of the workers, your countrymen and that is exactly what we have here in The Bahamas."

He added that Bahamians need to demand more from the government so they can stand up for Bahamians because this has not been happening.

While the union has given no definitive timeline when it will strike. Ms. Brown promises it will be within the coming weeks.

Traffic Fatality

Continued from / PAGE 1...

motor cycle, north along Queens Highway, in the settlement of Smith's Bay, when he lost control of the cycle and crashed into a utility pole, shortly before 12:00noon.

As a result of the crash, the male received serious injuries. He was transported to the Community Clinic in Smith's Bay, where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Officers from the RBPF Traffic Department, New Providence will travel to Cat Island to contin-

ue investigations into this incident.

This is the third traffic fatality for the year for the country in a matter of three weeks, with police in Grand Bahama investigating a suspected traffic fatality last Wednesday.

According to reports from Grand Bahama, shortly before 11:00pm Wednesday, police received a report of a bush fire in West End. Officers of the Fire Department upon arrival discovered a four door Sedan that had apparently ran off the road into bushes and was

engulfed in flames.

The fire was extinguished, and officers discovered human remains in the driver's seat of the vehicle.

Officers of the Traffic Division are actively investigating this matter.

Last Sunday, January 20, shortly after 3:00am, a man was travelling in the southern lane, west on J.F. Kennedy Drive, in a 2009 Nissan Skyline, when he lost control of the vehicle and crashed into a utility pole.

He was confirmed dead on the scene.

Gov't Receiving Bids On Grand Lucayan

Continued from / PAGE 1...

closed off by February 15th.

"Then there will be an evaluation period pairing down those who have submitted proposals to probably a small grouping and then the government will evaluate which one they feel is the best and we'll select an operator," he said.

"Obviously, we have

goals, but you know these things take time, and hopefully we will have it done in the shortest possible time," said the Minister.

The government expects over 20 bidders for the beleaguered property that was purchased by the government last August.

In a controversial

move, the Minnis administration paid a \$10 million deposit on the \$65 million three-hotel property.

A month later, the government came to parliament with a resolution to borrow \$35 million to facilitate the purchase.

The government is adamant about getting a sale as soon as possible.

WARNING SHOT



By Jerry Hutchinson

Auditor General Reports: Time to End the Charade

The mandate of the Auditor General as stated in The Constitution of The Bahamas Article 136 is as follows:

- The Auditor-General shall submit his reports made under paragraph (3) of this Article without undue delay to the Speaker (or, if the office of Speaker is vacant or the Speaker is for any reason unable to perform the functions of his office, to the Deputy Speaker) who shall cause them to be laid before the House of Assembly without undue delay.
- In the exercise of his functions under the provisions of paragraphs (3) and (4) of this Article, the Auditor-General shall not be subject to the direction or control of any other person or authority.
- The accounts of the department of the Auditor General shall be audited and reported on by the Minister of Finance.

Another year and another auditor general report years after the event. One may be forgiven if they view this as a pointless exercise, especially as very few persons appear to have ever been held accountable for their wrongdoings. It is inconceivable that the frequency and extent of alleged thievery can go on and on and only small level thieves face the courts.

So, whilst these reports some years after the fact make good political theatre, the underlying problems remain unaddressed. How can it be that the Auditor General's Office can state unequivocally that millions of our funds are misappropriated yet no one is brought to account? This may be because the wrongdoers are civil servants and not politicians and, that remediation is not a priority. According to the International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS).

"Naturally, the vulnerabilities in the company's system revealed after the theft should be addressed first, and any holes in the system should be closed. Job duties should be analysed, and some tasks may need to be re-assigned to prevent any single employee from having too much control over a function. Segregating duties is one of the most basic fraud prevention controls that all companies should implement, and, this is a very cheap method of fraud prevention if it is done correctly."

In the Tribune reporting of January 15, 2018 entitled "Auditors uncover \$450k bonus fraud" we see once more laid out in detail the nature of the fraud. If you read the article through you will see that it was affected by the very same systems failures the remediations recommended by the IFRS was intended to prevent. I believe that if the frauds detected by the Auditor General (AG) over the years, involving virtually all the government's revenue centres were totalled, it would probably be in the millions of dollars.

The question must be asked why? Why, after all the thefts and misappropriations documented is there not a professionally staffed accounting department in every ministry, whose properly prepared accounts can be audited by the AG's staff on a timelier basis? These accountants will also detect in good time, efforts by dishonest staff to commit fraud. This is a problem which has existed across administrations but, has been left to fester and proliferate. It is unconscionable to expect the AG with his minimally staffed and underfunded department to unravel these matters long after the fact. It is also criminally negligent to allow the flagrant theft of our funds to continue year on year without legal consequences. The Bahamas can use the stolen funds to grow the economy and ease the taxpayer's burdens but, I guess I am being altruistic. Okay, we know incontrovertibly that government revenue has been stolen over significant periods of time so, let's explore why nothing is being done to bring the culprits to justice.

Not believing anyone was a big victim.

There are some misguided persons who believe that government funds are endless. So, what if they thief a bit, no one will miss it. That's a spirit of criminality, avarice and covetousness. But they are right about the not missing it part. The lack of consistent oversight and protection of our funds is a disgrace. The idea that no one is a big victim is also selfish and short-sighted. Stolen funds represent a drain on the governments consolidated fund. It funds unfunded pension liabilities estimated to be around \$26 million. Civil servants expect their salaries, gratuities and pensions to come from the fund. With all the fraud being perpetrated on public funds, theft puts the safety of these benefits at

risk. At risk because of rampant dishonesty and theft literally, of your pension funds!

Attorneys advise against legal action.

One of the most effective shields against civil servants being prosecuted in our courts is General Orders (GO). The passage of time before the fraud is discovered and, the intentional absence of a paper trail makes a prosecution problematic.

The wrongdoers know this, and unions use it as a defence. So, employees are either transferred or interdicted in accordance with GO. In some instances, criminal staff are given the option of having the pilfered funds deducted from their salaries; this solution challenges logic. It is doomed to fail as, now the employee must double down on their thievery to replace the funds deducted! If, the fraudster is a kleptomaniac or a degenerate gambler then, heaven help us.

In each of these instances the public loses; the transferred employee is given another venue to continue their fraud; and, the interdicted employee is put on half pay. Eventually interest [or files] is lost forestalling the prosecution of the alleged fraudster. There is more than anecdotal evidence to conclude that neither of these options is in our interest. Indeed, some interdicted employees are being paid long after they have found employment outside the service and in several cases have died.

Emotional ties with the employee.

The Bahamas is a small society and, we all develop close workplace relationships. In some cases, friendships cover the course of many years. It is not unusual to find family members working together in some government departments. So, department heads will find it difficult to deal effectively with fraud in their departments especially as friends will not "rat" on each other. This is where you must rely on effective accounting and management systems which alerts department heads to fraud and other staff wrongdoing. Another serious issue is that deferential department heads will usually pass critical staff dishonesty issues to their Ministers. This creates a whole raft of human resource problems; undermines staff morale and creates "untouchables" within a department. Since Ministers hardly ever make other than politically expedient decisions, especially if it involves a constituent, the culprits remain in place, unpunished and emboldened. Indeed, Bahamian funds and operations are placed at risk when political appointees are sent to head highly technical departments with no training or experience in how they operate. They usually seek to cover their deficiencies with bullying tactics, bluster and arrogance; a deadly combination in any environment.

Not trusting the judicial system.

There is growing public perception that the legal system is not fit for purpose. There are too many instances when clear cases of fraud are brought to the courts and never prosecuted because of the non-appearance of witnesses, police and otherwise. Public servants, especially heads of departments are busy people.

It is unfair to repeatedly ask them to appear to court for a case that is not called. The glacial pace of our legal system, therefore, militates against civil servants being brought to justice for financial wrongdoings in the rare instances that they are charged. So, what do we do? Clearly, the accounting systems and methods must be overhauled and improved. The Bahamas cannot afford the continued "leakages" of public revenue because proper focus and resources are not being provided. What I find incredible is the lack of urgency being given to the prevalence of systemic fraud across multiple government ministries; rampant fraud which endangers the financial health of the country.

Imagine the national development projects we can undertake without seeking expensive bank loans if this criminal activity is remediated. I know that once the most recent auditor general's report is widely disseminated our politicians will propose all manner of fixes for the problem. They might even begin another police investigation with probably no results, just like in the past. For sure, eventually some small fry will be hammered in the courts, but the underlying problem will remain unaddressed; this is unhelpful. The necessary financial means and political will must be exerted if these scandalous episodes in our public life are to be ended. Our elected officials and law enforcement need to step up and solve this vexing problem.

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E D I T O R I A L

A CHANGE IN POLICY REQUIRED

The Chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), Doctor Timothy Harris, Prime Minister of St Kitts and Nevis leads a delegation from the Community to meet with United Nations (UN) Secretary-General His Excellency Antonio Guterres on today to discuss the crisis in Venezuela.

Absent from the delegation is a representative from the Bahamas. Our country voted in a special meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) for the Opposition leader in Venezuela to become the interim President of that country.

The meeting will take place at UN Headquarters, New York USA. Prime Minister Harris will be accompanied by Mia Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados, Dr. Keith Rowley, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, Peter David, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Grenada and Ambassador Irwin LaRocque, Secretary-General of CARICOM.

The meeting is a follow-up to the decision of CARICOM Heads of Government at their Special Emergency Meeting on Thursday which discussed the on-going situation in Venezuela. The CARICOM Leaders agreed to request a meeting with the UN Secretary-General which he accepted.

The position of the government of the Bahamas on the Venezuela crisis departs from the long held policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It is our view that our government owes the Bahamian people a more expansive explanation on the OAS vote, as it appears that the country might have taken a political decision to join the United States and other western nations to topple the current government headed by President Nicolas Maduro.

While we accept that the Venezuelan people have been starving for hunger and millions have fled the country under the current regime, it is hoped that the decision of our government is made on humanitarian grounds. If this is the reason, then moving forward, the official foreign policy position of the Bahamas government must change. The country's decision of interference in the affairs of other nations should not be based on pure politics.

Maduro oversaw a display of the army's Russian hardware on Sunday, with anti-aircraft flak and tank rounds pounding a hillside to show military force and loyalty in the face of an international ultimatum for new elections.

Maduro, 56, is confronting an unprecedented challenge to his authority after opposition leader Juan Guaido declared himself interim president, citing a fraudulent election. Guaido has won wide international support and offers amnesty to soldiers who join him.

On Sunday, Israel and Australia joined the countries backing the 35-year-old leader, and President Donald Trump's administration said it had accepted Venezuelan opposition figure Carlos Alfredo Vecchio as the country's diplomatic representative in the United States.

Early on Sunday, alongside Defense Minister Vladimir Padrino, Maduro watched a platoon of soldiers release volleys of rocket-propelled grenades, machine-gun anti-aircraft fire and tank rounds at hillside targets, the Russian ordnance kicking up clouds of dust at the Fort of Paramacay, an armored vehicle base.

Maduro said the display showed the world he had the backing of the military and that Venezuela's armed forces were ready to defend the country. Maduro says Guaido is taking part in a coup directed by

Trump's hardline policy advisers, who include Cold War veterans John Bolton and Elliott Abrams.

"Nobody respects the weak, cowards, traitors. In this world, what's respected is the brave, the courageous, power," Maduro said.

"Nobody should even think of stepping on this sacred soil. Venezuela wants peace," he said. "To guarantee peace, we have to be prepared."

From Feb. 10 to 15, the military is planning larger exercises that Maduro described as the "most important in the history of Venezuela."

The show of force was accompanied by a government publicity campaign online based on the slogan "Always Loyal, Never a Traitor," and followed a high-profile defection by the country's top military diplomat in the United States on Saturday.

The Fort of Paramacay, about two hours west of the capital, Caracas, was itself the site of an uprising in 2017, when about 20 soldiers and armed civilians attacked the base. The leader of the attack, which was quickly subdued, said he was calling for a transitional government.

Maduro on Sunday denounced an alleged conspiracy aimed at spreading rebellion in the army, saying thousands of messages were being sent to soldiers every day over WhatsApp and other social media platforms from neighboring Colombia. He later jogged with soldiers and boarded an amphibious vehicle at a navy base.

Guaido also sent a message to the military on Sunday, asking for support and ordering it not to repress civilians during an event in which supporters handed out copies of a proposed amnesty for people accused of crimes in the Maduro government.

"I order you not to shoot," he said. "I order you not to repress the people."

At a U.N. Security Council debate on Saturday, Russia and China strongly backed Maduro and rejected calls by the United States, Canada, Latin American nations and European powers for early elections.

Both Russia and China are major creditors of Venezuela. Since the government of Maduro's late mentor, Hugo Chavez, the OPEC nation has invested heavily in Russian weaponry, including Sukhoi fighter jets and heavy armor.

Maduro has rejected a European ultimatum to call elections within eight days and said Guaido violated the constitution by declaring himself interim leader. He said European nations should leave Venezuela, if they so wanted.

"The leaders of Europe are sycophants, kneeling behind the policies of Donald Trump," he said, adding he was open to dialogue and that meeting Trump was improbable, but not impossible.

Venezuela has sunk into turmoil under Maduro, with food shortages and protests amid an economic and political crisis that has led millions to leave the country and with inflation seen rising to 10 million percent this year.

Britain, Germany, France and Spain all said they would recognize Guaido if Maduro failed to call new elections within eight days, an ultimatum Russia said was "absurd" and the Venezuelan foreign minister called "childlike."

The United States, Canada, most Latin American nations and many European states say Maduro stole his second-term election win last May. The former union leader cruised to victory after blocking the main opposition candidates from running. Turnout was low.

Prime Minister to deliver prime-time National Report

Prime Minister, the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis will deliver his first national report for 2019 on Monday, January 28 at 8pm.

The prime-time address will be broadcast on television and is the first in a series of reports that will provide updates and information to the people of

The Bahamas on a broad range of national issues.

Monday's report will focus on what the government is doing to boost economic growth, to help create jobs and to provide greater opportunity for all Bahamians.

The report will highlight developments in the tourism industry, includ-

ing major projects and initiatives in New Providence, Grand Bahama and the Family Islands.

The report will also provide an overview of the national economy and significant investment projects.

Plans to strengthen Bahamian and foreign

direct investment and developments in the financial services sector will also be highlighted.

The second report will outline the government's social agenda, in areas such as combatting crime, education, health care, housing and home ownership, and other areas of social development.

The third report to the nation will detail what the government is doing in the areas of the environment, climate change, energy reform, land reform and other critical areas of development.

"These reports are a demonstration of your government's commitment to regularly communicate

with the people of The Bahamas on the state of the nation and important national developments that affect them," said Prime Minister Minnis.

The Prime Minister's prime-time report will be carried by ZNS, REVTV, ILTV and the Jones Communications Network.

Willard Patton Pre-School Pay Courtesy Call on the Governor General



▶ Teacher and students of Willard Patton Pre-School called upon Governor General, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Dame Marguerite Pindling at Government House, Tuesday, January 22, 2019. (BIS Photo/Letisha Henderson)

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Ground Breaking For \$250 Million PI Project

passes residential retail professional office space, and a renovated marina.

“It will take place in three phases; the first phase is expected to be completed and ready for occupancy by June 2020.

“It includes repairs for existing 90 slip hurricane hole marina, the construction of 16 residential units, 15,000 sq. ft of office space, 20,000 sq. ft of convenience, commercial retail and two restaurants,” said Dr. Minnis.

The project’s second and third phases will include the construction of 50-70 residential units and town houses respectively.

Sterling Global is also developing a new high-end condo triplex on Paradise Island.

“Beach house villas also on Paradise Island, Courtyard Marriott Downtown Nassau and Ocean Terraces on West Bay are a part of the portfolio. It is also considering major family island developments in both Abaco and Eleuthera,” said the Prime Minister.

He stated that “Sterling Hurricane Hole will enhance Paradise Island’s international reputation as a premiere destination.

“Developments like this, demonstrate that



► Ground-breaking ceremony for the Sterling Hurricane Hole Community Resort and Marina was held on the eastern end of Paradise Island, Friday, January 25, 2019. Pictured from left are Khaalis Rolle; David Kosoy, chairman of Sterling Global Financial; Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Hubert A. Minnis; Bill Green, President, Sterling Global Developments Limited; Stephen Tiller, President and COO, Sterling Global Developments Limited; and the Hon K. Peter Turnquest, Minister of Finance. **(BIS Photo/Kemuel Stubbs)**

investors continue to value the Bahamas as a world class destination and an excellent place for investment,” he said.

Sterling Global Financial CEO and Chairman, David Kosoy, said the goal is to bring

people to The Bahamas, they’re looking to hire many new people, as well as provide student tuitions.

“We are sponsoring kids here. I’m talking about 10, 11, 12-year-old kids here that are brilliant,

for school,” Kosoy said. “On the proviso that they come back to the country.

“We’ll send them to medical school, we’ll send them to whatever schools they want, if they’re A students we will help give them scholarships.

“And we’ve done that and where people can’t afford to send their kid to a good medical school, where I know they were working as a waiter or whatever, if they’re an A student and they promise to come



► Prime Minister, Dr. the Most Hon. Hubert A. Minnis addressing the ground breaking ceremony Friday, January 25, 2019.

back, we’ll help them. If they don’t come back, they owe us some money, but if they come back, they don’t owe us no money.

“So, we want to encourage the youth, where we’ve met many people that are not in the country right now, that are outside, we want to encourage them to come back.”

According to Prime Minister Minnis, Sterling Hurricane Hole is among the \$3.7 billion in foreign investment the FNM has approved since mid-2017, adding that a number of other large-scale New Providence based Bahamian owned tourism projects are in the works.

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ROAD TRAFFIC DEPARTMENT

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THOMAS A. ROBINSON NATIONAL STADIUM

NASSAU, N.P. BAHAMAS

The Road Traffic Department would like to remind all Franchise Holders – Taxi, Tour, Public Schedule, Private Schedule, Private Charter, Livery, Self-Drive Cars and Scooters that we are now accepting registration documents for the Bi-annual inspection period of October 2018 to May 2019.

The Following documents are required:

1. Passport/Voters Card and N.I.B Card (for holders not registered in the new system)
2. Up to date Franchise Receipt
3. Up to date Business License
4. Inspection Slip/Copies of expired Inspection Discs
5. Completed Inspection Forms for Companies with five (5) or more Vehicles that require On-site Inspection (forms Can be picked up at the Road traffic Department Franchise Unit).
6. Up to date Insurance Certificates
7. Vehicle Color and right/left hand drive (for new vehicles)

All Franchise Holders with a fleet of five (5) or more vehicles are invited to submit their packages to the Road Traffic Department, Franchise Unit Section 3 Eastern Grandstand of the Thomas A. Robinson National Stadium. All Packages will be processed on a first come first serve basis.

Please note that the Department will only receive payments in the form of:

- a. Certified cheques payable to the Public Treasury (No personal or company cheques)
- b. Visa, Master, Debit, Credit Cards
- c. Cash

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