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FRIDAY - FEBRUARY 8TH, 2019

75 CENTS

Opposition Explains Walk Out



► Opposition Leader, Philip 'Brave' Davis (File photo)

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

Brent Symonette. In a statement Opposition Leader said the unparliamentary behavior of Minister Symonette sought to silence the voice of Cat Island, Rum Cay and San Salvador.

The entire Parliamentary Opposition walked out of the House of Assembly Wednesday evening during the debate on the government's Fiscal Strategy Report 2018 on the grounds of what they said was a protest against bullying by St. Annes MP

The statement said, "Mr. Symonette arbitrarily disrupted the order of speakers as was agreed

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MORTON SALT EMPLOYEES STAGE SICK OUT

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Morton salt employees yesterday staged a sick out down at the Inagua plant after three members of the Bahamas Industrial Manufacturers and Allied Workers Union were suspended with pay and another slapped with a written warning. Union President

Jennifer Brown said during an interview with The Journal that some 40 employees participated in the exercise. She added that supervisors would have been operating the machinery during this time to fill in the gaps.

According to the letter dated February 6th, the suspension is for

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Women Charged With Stealing Church Funds

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK
Journal Staff Writer

Standing before Magistrate Samuel McKinney yesterday were three women accused of a litany of fraud related charges including stealing from Message of Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church.

Shandera Knowles and Nikia Anderson-Sands, both 28 along

with 21-year-old Shawnta Adderley, were formally charged with one count each of conspiracy to commit fraud by false pretenses, fraud by false pretenses, possession of forged documents and uttering false documents.

The court heard how on December 21, 2018, the trio, conspired to commit fraud by false

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Many Shipwrecked Haitians Missing

BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

The number of Haitian migrants who perished in last Saturday's boating disaster has risen to 30, according to the National

Emergency Management Agency.

Officials have so far determined that in total, some 83 people – 76 males and seven females

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BOY ESCAPES RANFURLY HOME

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Authorities are on the lookout for a 16-year-old boy who escaped the Ranfurly Home For Children on Mackey Street around midday this past Tuesday.

Social Services Director Lillian Quant told The Journal that the Department of Social Services is working closely with the police force to locate the young man.

She warned anyone with knowledge of the young man's whereabouts that harboring a minor who is in the care of the

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COURTESY CALLS AT GOVERNMENT HOUSE



► Governor General, Her Excellency the Most Hon. Dame Pindling presented students of L.W. Young Junior High School who made the Honour Roll and Principal's list with pins during an awards presentation in the Ballroom of Government House on Wednesday, February 6, 2019. (BIS Photo/Letisha Henderson)



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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

Man Charged With killing In The Course Of Dangerous Driving

BY JAMEELHA MISSICK
Journal Staff Writer

A Haitian man was arraigned yesterday afternoon before Magistrate Carolyn Vogt Evans for allegedly killing in the course of dangerous driving.

The court heard how on Saturday January

26th, 2019, about 12:51 am, 38-year-old Salvaes Fleurius of Farrington Road, drove a vehicle, causing the death of Michael Noelus.

Fleurius was also charged with removing a motor vehicle without the consent of its owner – Patrick Sturup. He was also charged with

driving while not covered against third party risk, and fraudulent use of license plates.

He pleaded not guilty to all, but one – driving while not covered against third party risk.

The matter is adjourned until April 5th where he will be re-arraigned with an interpreter present.



NOTICE

The Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority (URCA) was established on 1 August 2009, as a corporate body, under the Utilities Regulation and Competition Authority Act, 2009.

As the independent regulator, URCA's regulatory remit of the Electronic Communications Sector (ECS) covers radio and television broadcasting, radio spectrum, internet and data, pay-TV and voice telephony; and oversight of Electricity (ES) Sector which includes entities or persons who generate, transmit, distribute or supply electricity throughout The Bahamas.

URCA wishes to advise that a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the provision of Internal Audit Services has been uploaded to our website at www.urcabahamas.bs.

Interested parties should submit responses to the RFP by 4:00 pm on 28 February 2019.

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MINISTRY OF NATIONAL SECURITY

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Deadline for submission of application is 31st January, 2019.

Deadline for registration for SAT examination is 8th February, 2019 for the 9th March, 2019 test date (results from March test are only accepted if results from previous test are received by 1st March, 2019).

Students may register at:

<https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/international>

The USCGA code number for the SAT exam is 5807.

Deadline for ACT registration is 11th January, 2019 for 8th February, 2019 test date.

Students can register at <https://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/the-act-non-us.html>

The USCGA code number for the ACT exam is 0600.

Applicants can make application to sit the SAT/ACT at local SAT Centers in New Providence as follows: Aquinas College, St. Andrew's School, St. Anne's School, The University of The Bahamas, Government High School and Queen's College.

For further information, please contact the Royal Bahamas Defence Force Human Resource Officer, Lieutenant Commander Michael Hanna at telephone 362-3705 or 362-3711 or via email at michaelhanna@rbdf.gov.bs or visit the website www.rbdf.gov.bs

Social Services Minister begins process towards addressing legislative deficiencies

Minister of Social Services and Urban Development, the Hon. Frankie A. Campbell, met with senior Administrators and Heads of Departments and Divisions of the ministry Thursday (February 7, 2019) to begin the process of ensuring greater ease in "addressing certain urgent legislative deficiencies."

Minister Campbell was joined by newly-appointed Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, Michael Foulkes; Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, Sherrylee Smith; David Cates, Permanent Secretary (Acting), Urban Renewal Commission; and Marva Brown, First Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development.

Also in attendance were Heads from a number of the Divisions that fall under the auspices of the Department of Social Services, among them, Children and Family Services Division and Senior Citizens Division, in addition to the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Persons



► Minister of Social Services and Urban Development, the Hon. Frankie A. Campbell (centre) addressing senior ministry officials and Heads of Departments/Divisions during Thursday's meeting. Pictured (from left) are: Lorraine Duvalier, Senior Citizens Division; Maria Kelley, Executive Secretary, National Commission for Person with Disabilities; David Cates, Permanent Secretary, Acting, Urban Renewal Commission; Sherrylee Smith, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development; Minister Campbell; Michael Foulkes, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development; Marva Brown, First Assistant Secretary, Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development; Charlamae Fernander, Children and Families Services Division, and Lillian Quant-Forbes, Director, Department of Social Services.
(BIS Photo/Matt Maura)

with Disabilities.

The Heads have further oversight and responsibility for the areas in which legislation either needs to be introduced or reviewed.

Minister Campbell on Wednesday (February 6)

welcomed Mr. Foulkes "into the Social Services family" stating that Ministry officials would rely upon one of Mr. Foulkes' many strengths -- that of being an Attorney-at-Law -- to help guide and drive the

Government of The Bahamas' commitments to a number of key pieces of legislation as they relate to the Ministry of Social Services and Urban Development, its Departments and

Divisions.

"We discussed what I believe at this time is the more urgent role that needs to be filled which falls aptly in line with one of the many skills Parliamentary Secretary Foulkes possesses and

that is of being an Attorney-at-law to help us with the weaknesses or the non-existence of certain pieces of legislation," Minister Campbell said.

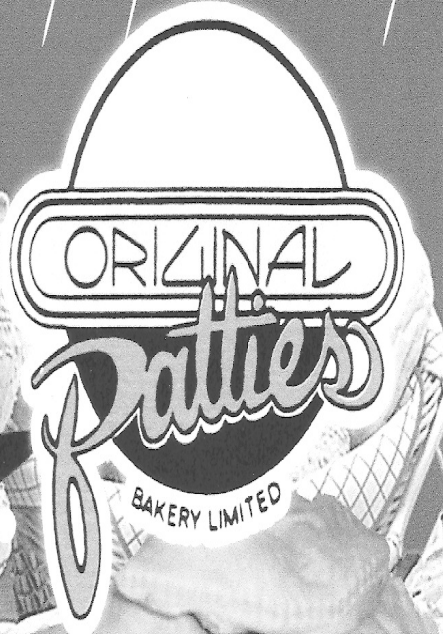
"Without hesitation, primary amongst them are the Regulations to support the Persons with Disabilities Act 2014, and legislation regarding Older Persons and Urban Renewal that need to be addressed. We also have a number of Conventions that we, as a country, are Signatory to and you would find in many instances that there may be lapses. That is our starting point," Minister Campbell added.

Minister Campbell said the purpose of Thursday's meeting was to: "introduce our new Parliamentary Secretary to Heads of Departments, particularly those who have oversight and responsibility for the areas [in which] I need legislation either introduced or reviewed."

"I wanted to establish a line of communication and the protocol that would ensure a greater ease in addressing these urgent legislative deficiencies," Minister Campbell added.

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Opposition Explains Walk Out

Continued from / PAGE 1...

and at this stage in my career, I am not about to be disrespected or dictated to by the likes of Mr. Symonette."

As it related to the Fiscal Strategy Report 2018, Mr. Davis said he has several observations.

"The report, mandated

by the Fiscal Responsibility Act, represents nothing more than a codification of longstanding conventional practices in the administration of public finances.

"It is akin to a contract between two people and is only as good as the propriety of the parties involved ; in that there are no built

in constraints or enforcement mechanisms.

"Cabinet Ministers can do as they please, such as the whimsical and unbudgeted purchase of the Grand Lucayan Hotel – then make amendments after the fact with no accountability.

"Or cabinet can raise taxes on a whim; they can

also promise, then unceremoniously abandon important post hurricane repairs or even fire thousands of public servants in the name of 'fiscal responsibility,'" he said.

Considering the government's handling of the country's fiscal affairs Mr. Davis said in his view, it is unlikely that

the government will meet many of the fiscal targets set out in the current budget.

The Opposition Leader cautioned the government to be more concerned about the 'social deficit' or 'balance sheet' in determining their fiscal priorities.

He added that the national budget only exists to serve the best interests of the people.

The statement ended with Mr. Davis thanking his parliamentary colleagues who acquitted themselves in holding the government to account for its fiscal stewardship of the people's money.

MORTON SALT EMPLOYEES STAGE SICK OUT

Continued from / PAGE 1...

seven days – pending an investigation.

The reason cited was that the employees knowingly and willfully violated Article 2.1 of their Industrial Agreement, which notes that the employee must actively implement any action necessary to assure the

efficient and economic operation of the company through an orderly and constructive relationship between the management of Morton Salt Bahamas Limited and the union.

The letter noted that the investigation will also explore the potential that one of the reprimanded employees may have violated the Last

Chance Agreement dated April 23, 2018.

The company is expected to make a determination on the matter before February 14th.

The letters are signed by Morton's General Manager, Michael Nixon, and the union plans to meet on Saturday to discuss their next move.

Women Charged With Stealing Church Funds

Continued from / PAGE 1...

pretenses.

On the same date it is alleged that they were in possession of a forged document namely a Royal Bank of Canada (RBC) cheque drawn on the account of Message of Hope Seventh Day Adventist Church, committed fraud by false pretenses by obtaining \$7,000 from The Bank of The Bahamas and uttered a false document, RBC cheque of \$7,000 also from Message of Hope Church.

The women pleaded not guilty to all charges.

Nikia Anderson-Sands was also arraigned on separate charges.

It is alleged that she

conspired to commit fraud by false pretenses, obtained \$6,000 from The Bank of The Bahamas by means of false pretenses, was in possession of a forged document and acquired \$6,000 part proceeds of criminal conduct.

She too pleaded not guilty to all charges.

The women were not granted bail; however they can apply to the Supreme Court for bail.

They were subsequently remanded to The Bahamas Department of Corrections until April 8th for trial.

Allegations of fraud also on 55-year-old, insurance agent, Bradley Ferguson.

The Ivanhoe Road, Mackey Street resident,

faced 24 such counts - six counts each of falsification of accounts, stealing by reason of employment, possession of forged documents and uttering a forged document.

The accused, an employee of Atlantic Medical Insurance, allegedly obtained \$3,223.14 from seven policy holders.

He pleaded not guilty to all the charges but one count – falsification of accounts.

He was not granted bail; however, he can apply to the Supreme court for bail.

The matter was adjourned until March 25th for trial.

He was represented by Monique Gomez.

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WARNING SHOT



By Jerry Hutchinson

Blacklisted Again: Time To Go To The UN?

By Jerry Hutchinson

“The difference between tax avoidance and tax evasion is the thickness of a prison wall”.

-- **Dennis Healey, Former UK Chancellor of the Exchequer.**

As sure as bills follow excessive Christmas spending, The Bahamas is once more on a blacklist, this time from the Netherlands. No matter how cleverly the government crafts financial and commercial legislation; or, how much national sovereignty is foregone; how much we complain about the inequity of it all; how many formerly highly paid Bahamians are now unemployed, nothing seems to change. Like the proverbial deer in the head lamps, Bahamians are always waiting to be hit from some quarter, usually by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). I know that complaining about the actions of the OECD and organizations who enforce their rules is one of our national pastimes. Many have contributed ideas on how to relieve The Bahamas of the threat of Blacklisting from the OECD. However, I propose to take another route. I want to know what's bugging the OECD and if their irritation with The Bahamas and other Blacklisted nations is justified and its rules fairly applied. Also, how can an intergovernmental economic organization continually attack the very economic existence of a member of the United Nations?

According to the OECD website: “it is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 member countries, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade. It is a forum of countries describing themselves as committed to democracy and the market economy, providing a platform to compare policy experiences, seeking answers to common problems, identify good practices and coordinate domestic and international policies of its members. Most OECD members are high-income economies with a very high Human Development Index (HDI) and are regarded as developed countries.”

As of 2017, the OECD member states collectively comprised 62.2% of global nominal GDP (US\$49.6 trillion) and 42.8% of global GDP (Int.\$54.2 trillion) and purchasing power parity. And, like all fully developed countries the OECD countries have large and expensive social benefits programmes which need to be funded. These benefits include but are not limited to: unemployment benefits, family benefits, social assistance benefits, housing benefits, covering old age, survivors, and incapacity-related benefits; health, family, and active labour market programmes; and unemployment, housing benefits; pensions. Funding would normally come from taxes paid by its citizens. However, many of their wealthier citizens and businesses seek to reduce their tax liability through various legal investment schemes some of which reduce tax liability and, in some cases, evade all tax liability”.

The OECD represents in part, many of the richest nations in Europe. Some of whom were colonial powers and had colonies across the globe. These nations plundered the wealth of their colonies in Africa and Latin America; and, repatriated vast amounts of gold and diamonds to their national coffers. This explains why they were able to create these massive economies especially as there are no diamond mines in Europe and very little gold mining. Yet, these countries remain major players in the markets for precious metals and minerals. Having plundered the natural resources of its colonies to build vibrant, affluent and expansive and expensive social security programmes for their citizens, these historical colonialists are now asking their former colonies to collect their taxes for them! To assist them in spreading their false narrative, the OECD cynically conflates tax avoidance which is legal and tax evasion which is illegal. They have a lot at stake. The OECD estimates that there is between 50 Billion and 70 Billion Euros in taxable funds held in offshore jurisdictions pejoratively called “tax havens,” which they seek to collect by any means.

If that means destroying another nation's economy while its own members regularly engage in the same alleged facilitation then, so be it! These actions are nothing less than neo-colonialism and economic warfare which is defined as: “the use of, or the threat to use, economic means against a country in order to weaken its economy and thereby reduce its political and military power. Economic warfare also includes the use of economic means to compel an adversary to change its policies or behaviour or to undermine its ability to conduct normal relations with other countries.”

“Some common means of economic warfare are trade embargoes, boycotts, sanctions, tariff discrimination, the freezing of capital assets, the suspension of aid, the prohibition of investment and other capital flows, and expropriation”. Encyclopaedia Britannica.

How unfair and arbitrary OECD actions are especially as regards to alleged money laundering was highlighted in the Guardian (UK) of 20th March 2017 which stated: “According to the newspaper, these documents show that between 2010 and 2014, British registered companies and British-based banks helped move out of Russia at least \$20bn of the proceeds of criminal activities.

This should come as no surprise. In 2016, the Home Affairs Select Committee concluded that the London property market was the primary avenue for the laundering of £100bn of illicit money a year. The investigative journalist Roberto Saviano has said of the international drugs trade: “Mexico is its heart and London is its head”. So, the recent Blacklisting of the Bahamas by the Netherlands was both surprising and troubling. Surprising because the OECD usually hunts in a pack and a country's legislators can partially rely on their findings. Puzzling because as an Oxfam report concluded: “Blacklist or Whitewash? Oxfam applied the criteria the EU is using to draw up the blacklist to 92 countries screened by the union and its 28-member states. The criteria exclude EU member states, but if they did not, Oxfam concluded that four countries should be blacklisted: Ireland; Luxembourg; The Netherlands; Malta.”

The Cayman government also weighed in and articulated the lurking suspicion of many blacklisted countries when it was reported: “The Cayman Islands government has accused The Netherlands of including the British territory on its separate blacklist as a way of diverting criticisms of its own tax practices by attacking legitimate tax regimes” Caribbean News Now 29 January 2019. Imagine that: blacklisted by the Netherlands and all we wanted was a slice of the “Dutch Sandwich”! The implications of this are far-reaching and troubling. EU countries, many of whom are members of the OECD, do not appear to apply the criteria it uses to black list The Bahamas on its members. That's my problem. The Bahamas and other Caribbean nations are singled out for blacklisting while notorious money laundering and terrorist financing facilitators are being given a free pass. In The Bahamas especially, unfair and arbitrary demands by the OECD has cost us dearly. As an example, the Central Bank of the Bahamas in a December 2018 industry briefing revealed that: “Combined domestic and “offshore” banking assets declined by 35.2 % falling from \$657.9bn to \$426.2bn between 2012 and last September”; a banking industry shrinkage of \$200bn.

The briefing also examined the job losses in the banking sector which declined by 113 jobs or 2.5% of the financial services industry's workforce mainly through a “shift in business strategy and de-risking”. These grim statistics confirm my suspicions that despite the numerous bills and legislation passed by successive administrations, the OECD, s policies are not to seek compliance as they define it but, rather, to subjugate us. We can add to this sad litany the flight of major European banks from our jurisdiction because of the actions of the OECD. Our appeasement of an organization who applies unfair and economically devastating requirements on the Bahamas yet, allows its member countries to go away scot free is not and never has been in the best interests of the Bahamas. My view parallels that of Cayman Government officials who complained that the OECD backlisting policies were: “unjustified” and “wholly lacking in fairness and credibility”.

The discriminatory way the OECD and EU applies its rules especially as it relates to its UK overseas territories has not gone unnoticed. Molly Scott Cato, a Green MEP and a member of the European Parliament's Panama Papers committee, said: “Once again, the UK and its offshore territories are at the heart of things. “She said Britain had to “clean up its act” and regulate the “legal limbo” of its overseas territories if it wanted a positive trading relationship with the EU after Brexit” The Financial Times. Indeed, no missive or sanction issued can be fair, balanced, or non-discriminatory if members of the decision-making body of the OECD are themselves not compliant with the rules they seek to enforce. The Bahamas has been made to virtually destroy its financial services through OECD driven legislation with nothing to show but economic pain and job losses. As a member of the United Nations (UN) our country finds itself being relentlessly attacked by economic means by other UN members through its surrogate, the OECD, a non-member but with Observer Status. We are accused of many transgressions and while we may sometimes fall short, we are not criminals! In their rush to destroy, the OECD conveniently ignores the research by imminent scholars on the offshore banking industry.

They also ignore the fact that as regards the “offshore” banking industry, we are approaching a state of diminishing returns. Its just not worth the time and effort to comply when, the OECD continually moves the goalposts. By “we” I mean the Bahamian people. The ones who are suffering daily inconvenience because of oppressive banking requirements driven by OECD policy. Not the “nattering” class who make fortunes from offshore banking.

No matter how this ends, they have amassed fortunes in fees to insulate themselves from the fallout. Fortunes which probably far exceed the corporate taxes collected by the public treasury although we foot the bill and bear the shame of

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E D I T O R I A L

JUSTICE SYSTEM UNDER ATTACK

On the Radio programme Issues of the Day on Monday, the former Minister of State in the Office of the Attorney General, Damien Gomez made some scathing remarks about the Criminal Justice System in the Bahamas which left many Bahamians stunned.

Mr. Gomez who is a Queens Counsel and an officer of the Court said that the Criminal Justice System in the country has been corrupted by the behaviour of National Security Minister Marvin Dames, Health Minister Doctor Duane Sands and Attorney General Carl Bethel.

He called for the resignation of all of these Ministers in the wake of the ruling by Chief Magistrate Joyann Ferguson Pratt in the bribery and extortion trial of former Member of Parliament, Frank Smith.

Whether these Ministers resign or not is a matter of interest as many Bahamians believe that the Westminster system of government is not observed in its truest form in the Bahamas. Its conventions are used conveniently.

The Magistrate last Friday ruled that Smith has no case to answer because the prosecution's main witness, Barbara Hanna was unreliable and that the Ministers were unorthodox in their involvement in the case.

Mr. Gomez told the nation on radio that “the Ministers should take responsibility for their actions and resign. If they don't have the moral fortitude to resign, then the Prime Minister should fire them.” The Queens Counsel called the actions of the Ministers “pure evil, where politicians would get up in Parliament and condemn a man without justification.” He said the worst form of corruption is corruption of justice itself.

Since his statements, the Director of Public Prosecutions has filed an appeal of the Magistrate's ruling with the Court of Appeal. That office claims that the learned Magistrate tool extraneous matters into consideration; evidence was wrongly rejected or inadmissible evidence was wrongly admitted by the magistrate and that in the latter case, there was not sufficient evidence to sustain the decision. The further claim that the decision was unreasonable or could not be supported having regard to evidence.

We pass no comment on these matters

before the court, but we are surprised that the government seems unwilling to let go of their attempt to convict a man who has been acquitted by a magistrate on the basis of the evidence. Just after the last general elections we questioned by the government was so hell-bent and anxious to bring criminal charges against their political opponents and drag them before the courts in cuffs and chains in the Bahamas.

There are several questions that are relevant in this matter sent to us by an observer which we believe are worth considering: Did the Pindling administration take the country down this road even in the face of the indiscretions supposedly committed by the United Bahamian Party government after the 1967 general elections?

Did the Ingraham administration take the country down this road in 1992 after succeeding the Pindling government which had been in power for 25 years? Did the Christie administration do so in 2002 after a campaign where several outgoing Ministers were on the defensive after being accused of corruption?

It is our considered opinion that the Minnis administration should withdraw the appeal filed and bring an end to all other cases placed before the courts of alleged corruption after the general elections of 2017. There is a clear perception among members of the attentive public that the cases were born out of spite and malice. In addition the Police work in the Smith case has been roundly condemned, even to the point that Mr. Gomez is asking for a Commission on Inquiry into Police practice in the country.

We have a small population and the level of tribalism is far too high. Bahamians cannot sit by idly and allow our Criminal Justice System to deteriorate to the point where we lose confidence in the Police, the Judiciary and those who ought to be in the vanguard in protecting the system.

We therefore call on the legal fraternity to speak up and speak out on what is wrong with the system. Certainly Damien Gomez is not the only Attorney from a Bahamas Bar Association of 1500 strong who believe that our justice system has been corrupted. We await to hear the voices of others.

Blacklisted Again: Time To Go To The UN?

CONT'D.

reputational damage. They know the futility of trying to resolve our differences with the OECD by legislation but, remain silent. The more legal band aids, the longer it takes for the victims to die; while the victims die the death of a thousand cuts the fees keep rolling in. In the end, OECD actions is all about politics. They select where and upon whom they will inflict torment. The Caribbean Offshore banking industry is an easy target because of our self-doubt.

Sovereign countries have allowed themselves to be convinced that their financial services activity which is fully legal is somehow non-compliant. A study by Findley, Nielson and Sharman stated: “They were never able to set up a shell company in Caymans, Bahamas or the Seychelles. The politicisation of the blacklists has enabled London to become the global centre of money laundering”. It is time for The Bahamas to resist implementing endless financial legislation which appears to be futile. We need to accept that the world view of OECD members is informed by their mistaken belief that the real threat of money laundering and tax evasion lies on the small, palm-fringed islands of their former colonies and not in London or the money markets or banking sectors of its members. And as the saying goes “Once a false idea becomes fixed in a person's mind, he will twist facts or probability to accommodate it rather than question it”.

This is a political fight which requires a fair hearing in the proper forum. OECD actions are biased, discriminatory, wrongheaded and selective in who must comply. The Bahamas and other Caribbean nations must fight this clear

attempt to usurp the sovereignty of our countries through the deliberate and pre-meditated undermining of their financial systems. The Resolution adopted by the General Assembly 3281 (XXIX). Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States December 1974 gives a partial list of members rights and obligations which may assist in this. These are:

Article 10

All States are juridically equal and, as equal members of the international community, have the right to participate fully and effectively in the international decision-making process in the solution of world economic, financial and monetary problems, inter alia, through the appropriate international organizations in accordance with their existing and evolving rules, and to share in the benefits resulting therefrom.

Article 24

All States have the duty to conduct their mutual economic relations in a manner which takes into account the interest of other countries. In particular, all States should avoid prejudicing the interests of developing countries.

Article 32

No State may use or encourage the use of economic, political or any other type of measures to coerce another State in order to obtain from it the subordination of the exercise of its sovereign rights.

So, lets get on with it!

Tourism growth accounts for \$300 million in additional spending

Tourism's "mind blowing" growth for the eleven months ending November 30, 2018 accounted for \$300 million in additional spending into the Bahamian economy, Minister of Tourism & Aviation, the Hon. Dionisio D'Aguilar told House Members, Wednesday (February 6, 2019).

Mr. D'Aguilar said the new growth has also had an added impact on job creation within the Commonwealth, accounting for 10,405 new jobs. Much of this growth he said, was created in the Private Sector and in the number of self-employed persons.

Seconding the Resolution to Adopt the Fiscal Strategy Report, Mr. D'Aguilar said preliminary data reveal that the number of foreign visitors to The Bahamas increased by "a whopping" 425,000 persons or 7.7 per cent for the eleven months ending November 30, 2018.

Minister D'Aguilar said more importantly, stopover visitors, that portion of for-



► Minister of Tourism & Aviation, the Hon. Dionisio D'Aguilar

eign visitors that spend the most "in fact 20 times more than the cruise passenger" increased by over 205,000 persons or what the Minister termed "a mind blowing 17.1 per cent."

"These additional visitors contributed over \$300 million of additional spending into our economy in 2018," Minister D'Aguilar said.

Mr. D'Aguilar said the increases in Stopover Visitors, as reported in the

Caribbean Journal, were spread across The Bahamas with Abaco up by 17.6 per cent; Eleuthera (up by 28.5 per cent), the Berry Islands (up by 18.9 per cent), San Salvador (up by 8.8 per cent); Andros (up by 8.8 per cent); Grand Bahama (up by 3.2 per cent) and Exuma up by 1 per cent, "but up nonetheless," Minister D'Aguilar said.

The Tourism Minister said projections for January and February,

2019 indicate that the number of stopover visitors to The Bahamas will continue to grow by 15 per cent in January and 12 per cent in February.

Minister D'Aguilar said the country's success was due in large part to the staff of the Ministry of Tourism whom he said "have been doing a wonderful job."

"Even though I sit at the top of the pyramid, the staff at the Ministry of Tourism, once you let them get on with it, they shine and they

have been truly impressive and so the accolades that I take on their behalf is really due to them and so I pass it on to them."

Minister D'Aguilar said all of the new growth in tourism has had an added impact on job creation within the Commonwealth, accounting for the aforementioned 10,405 new jobs.

"According to the Labour Report just released, there were 200,155 employed in May,

2017, when we took office and there were 210,560 persons employed in November, 2018 – an increase of 10,405.

"What is so heartening to see also, is that the employment gains were driven by the Private Sector and growth in the number of Self-Employed persons and not by the government. Mr. Speaker, this Minnis-led Administration is turning things around."

Minister D'Aguilar said he supported the Resolution to Adopt the Fiscal Strategy Report.

"The Report shows it all," Mr. D'Aguilar said. "It tells you how well or how poorly we perform. The Report shows you our plan for the fiscal affairs of the country. You can see for yourself. We have nothing to hide. We are holding ourselves accountable to the Bahamian people. We are being open and transparent. That is what you voted for us to do and that is what, with the adoption of this Report, we are now doing," Minister D'Aguilar added.



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Many Shipwrecked Haitians Missing

Continued from / PAGE 1...

were on board the ill-fated sloop when it set sail for the United States.

However, the 40-ft vessel ran aground off

Fowl Cay, near Man-O-War Cay, Abaco. The number of survivors stands at 18.

This still leaves dozens more unaccounted for. NEMA officials

say no bodies will be released until the deceased are identified and embalmed.

This past Monday, a team of immigration and police officers, the coro-

ner, the First Secretary in the Haitian Embassy in The Bahamas, along with local representatives from the Haitian community met to hear concerns and to talk about the

way forward.

This is not the first time an incident like this has happened, but it is the first of this magnitude where so many lives were loss.

NEMA Director Captain Stephen Russell in a release extended condolences to the people of Haiti as well as those residing here in The Bahamas.

BOY ESCAPES RANFURLY HOME

Continued from / PAGE 1...

Minister responsible for social services is against the law.

She added, "we ask that if at all possible

and at every circumstance, to please report the matter to the police as quickly as possible."

When asked if there may have been any friction between the young

man and the home's facilitators, Director Quant said that she wasn't aware of any.

However, she added, that there are rules and regulations in place that

need to be followed.

She said, "Security is also a factor and concern for us. Making sure that our children are safe and making sure that the staff who

care for our children are also in a safe environment is of the utmost importance."

She added that the department is forever

vigilant and will continue to do the best that they can do to take care of the children that dwell in the homes residential facilities.

Stakeholders participate in meetings with e-Governance Academy regarding digitization of government services

In keeping with its thrust towards E-government, the Bahamas Government is hosting meetings with local stakeholders and representatives of e-Governance Academy, Estonia, from February 4-8, 2019.

The meetings are intended to provide participants with an overview of the impact of digitization on Estonia and the advantages for The Bahamas. It is expected that eventually the Academy will propose the way forward for e-government transformation for The Bahamas.

At Wednesday's presentation for private sector representatives, poli-

cy makers and drivers of change, Minister of State for Grand Bahama, the Hon. Kwasi Thompson, said it is important for the e-Governance Academy representatives to make their presentations.

"I want you to see what the possibilities are for The Bahamas. I believe they are able to share with you what they are doing in Estonia and it will cause your mind to get to a point of what it is we can actually accomplish in The Bahamas and what we can have in The Bahamas."

Minister Thompson said although Estonia is ranked number 12 out of 190 economies in the

Ease of Doing Business index, they are completely "unsatisfied" with where they are today.

"They can incorporate a company in less than 20 minutes but they are pushing to get to the next level. Let us learn from them and let us not limit ourselves to them," said Minister Thompson.

According to World Bank ratings, The Bahamas is ranked 118 in the Ease of Doing Business index.

Participants in sessions to date include representatives of the following: the Department of Information Technology, the Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Legal Affairs, the



Annela Kiirats, Programme Director of e-Governance Trainings, e-Governance Academy, makes a point during Wednesday's morning session. Also shown is the Hon. Kwasi Thompson, Minister of State for Grand Bahama and Elise Delancy, permanent secretary. (BIS Photos/Patrick Hanna)

Parliamentary Registration Department, the National Insurance Board, the Royal

Bahamas Police Force, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force.

Presentations will also

be made to the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert Minnis and the Cabinet of The Bahamas.

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