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THURSDAY - AUGUST 22ND, 2019

75 CENTS

Junior Doctors Strike

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Junior doctors at Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) stood in the rain on Wednesday morning to strike in solidarity after not receiving their holiday pay from the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA).

All non-essential services were removed and only emergency staff remained on the job.

According to President of the Bahamas Doctors Union (BHA) Dr. Melisande Bassett, it has been a battle for years. PHA's managing board negotiated a settlement of



▶ Union leaders supported Wednesday's strike by junior doctors outside the Princess Margaret Hospital. The junior doctors are demanding their holiday pay. (Journal Photo)

■ See page 4...

BPSU President: 'Enough is Enough'
 BY BERTHONY MCDERMOTT
 Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas Public Services Union (BPSU) President Kimsley Ferguson said "enough is enough" and vowed to continue to fight, as some 200 members at the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) with-

■ See page 4...

PHA Explains Jr. Doctors' Holiday Pay
 BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

The Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) yesterday explained that in the Bahamas Doctors Union's (BDU) Industrial Agreements of 2014 and 2017, related to holiday pay, it was recommended and

■ See page 8...

PHA Owes Doctors \$5 Million

BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands revealed that the Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) is in debt of \$5 million to more than 400 doctors, each owed \$2,500.

Dr. Sands revealed this information yesterday while appearing on Love

97's Issues of the Day radio talk show where he responded to the junior doctors' strike for holiday pay as promised in their industrial agreement.

Dr. Sands said PHA has been having the issue of verifying the time worked by the doctors.

"How do you deter-

■ See page 4...



▶ Minister of Health Dr. Duane Sands

\$3.5 MILLION MARCO ALERT CONTRACT SIGNED

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

The Bahamas yesterday joined 18 other countries with child abduction alert systems, after signing a \$3.5 million contract with Bahamian company Multimedia Technologies for the long-awaited MARCO Alert System.

This system implemented on the eve of Marco Archer's 19th birthday, is patterned after the Amber Alert system in the United States.

Minister of National Security Marvin Dames said the alert will be criti-



▶ Surrounded by Cabinet members, law enforcement representatives, national and international stakeholders, and family members of the late Marco Archer, the government of The Bahamas signed the contract with Multimedia Technologies, Ltd., for the MARCO's Alert System in the Bimini Room of the Baha Mar Convention Centre on August 21, 2019. (BIS Photos/Eric Rose)

■ See page 8...





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PM Receives Letter of Introduction from New UK High Commissioner

Yesterday, Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis was presented with a Letter of Introduction from Her Excellency Sarah Dickson, the United Kingdom's new High Commissioner to The Bahamas.

The presentation at the Office of the Prime Minister officially marks the re-establishment of the British High Commissioner's office in The Bahamas following a 14-year absence.

"With the resident presence of the United Kingdom in The Bahamas, we look forward to the further deepening and strengthening of our relations, especially in the areas such as education, climate and security," said Prime Minister Minnis.

High Commissioner Dickson's Letter of Introduction from British Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Boris Johnson noted the United Kingdom's intention to maintain "the relations of close friendship which so happily exist" between both countries.

"It is a great pleasure and honour to serve in this beautiful island nation as British High Commissioner," said Her Excellency Dickson, adding that both countries have a long shared history; common values such as democracy and the rule of law; and similar interests including protecting the environment and promoting trade.

The High Commissioner has served the British Diplomatic

Service for more than 20 years. Her last diplomatic appointment was as Her Majesty's Ambassador to Guatemala and Honduras.

She has also served in Spain, Argentina and Yugoslavia; as well as various appointments in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London.

Prime Minister Minnis thanked the former British High Commissioner accredited to The Bahamas based out of Jamaica, and noted the excellent collaboration to ensure that relations with the United Kingdom remained excellent.

The Government of The Bahamas looks forward to enhanced relations with the United Kingdom including trade and economic relations.



► Her Excellency Sarah Dickson, High Commissioner Designate of the United Kingdom presented her Letters of Introduction to Prime Minister the Most Hon. Dr. Hubert A. Minnis at the Office of the Prime Minister on Wednesday, August 21, 2019. (BIS Photos/Yontalay Bowe)

Man Shot in Elizabeth Estates

Police are investigating a shooting incident that occurred on Tuesday, which left a man in hospital.

According to police, shortly before 10 p.m. a man was at a home

on Commonwealth Boulevard, Elizabeth Estates, when he was approached by a male armed with a firearm, who shot him multiple times about the body before run-

ning away. The injured man was transported to hospital and is presently listed in critical condition.

Investigations continue.

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The plot referred to comprise six thousand six hundred and eight (6,608.00) square feet on the southern side of Laird Street two hundred and sixty seven feet east of Blue Hill road in the southern district of New Providence **bounded on the north** by Laird Street and running thereon fifty two and thirty three (52.33) hundredths feet **on the south** by property of various owners and running thereon fifty-eight and sixty nine hundredths (58.69) feet, **on the east** by property of Sadie Curtis and running thereon one hundred and eighteen and twenty seven hundredths (118.27) feet, and **on the west** by property of one Dorsette and running thereon one hundred and twenty and forty four (120.44) hundredths feet.

Zeneta Archer-Deveaux

ZENETA ARCHER-DEVEAUX

Phone No. 242-818-7911

Davis Saddened by BPL's Affects on Senior Citizens

BY BERTHONY McDERMOTT
Journal Staff Writer

Opposition Leader Philip Davis was left saddened after touring Pat's Senior Citizens' Home yesterday to assess the impact the incessant power outages played on the home.

The tour revealed that beds are down, appliances like refrigerators and air conditioners were lost, a number of food items had to be thrown out and medicines had to be repurchased due to spoilage.

Owner Patricia Moxey also noted that when there's an outage residence on oxygen machines are put at risk.

"The machine goes 24/7 so when the electricity goes off, we have to run to find the oxygen

tank to connect the person up because their life depends on it and we have more than one person depending on oxygen in here," she said.

"Most of our patients came straight from the hospital. While we understand and feel what is going on with BPL, I will use an old phrase, 'while the grass is growing the horse is starving' and I'm saying that to say we need to get it sorted out quick, fast and hurry."

The opposition leader called the situation at Pat's saddening, adding that the former Progressive Liberal Party government corrected issues at the power company and left a plan in place.

When the Free

National Movement administration took office, he said, it ignored the plans and significantly raised the cost of electricity.

"In 2012, in July, Bahamians were paying up to 45 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity," Mr. Davis said.

"When we were displaced by the Bahamian people in 2017, electricity bills had been reduced to just under 30 cents per kilowatt hour. It's now back up to more than 45 cents per kilowatt hour in two short years.

"Why? Because this government came in and they, just like a bull in a China, closet dismantled the plans."

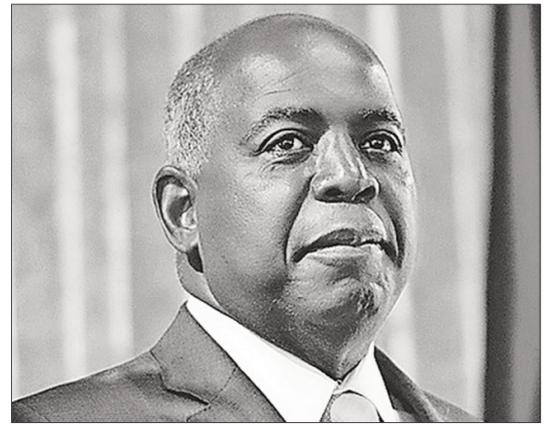
Mr. Davis further asserted that load shed-

ding was not a PLP government issue because that administration sought to fix it.

He added that the prime minister's assertion that BPL is in crisis was a bit too late.

"It just shows his insensitivity to what was actually occurring. He seemed to have been deaf to the cries of the Bahamian people. He seemed to be immune to the suffering of the Bahamian people," he said.

"He seemed not to appreciate the necessity of reliable power in the country and how critical it is to the survival of our economy, to the convenience of the people and the need or necessary it is to the livelihood and to



► Opposition Leader Philip Davis

the lives of people.

"As you would have heard here, there is medicine that has to be refrigerated."

The PLP donated two battery powered fans to Pat's and has committed to having a physiothera-

pist come in to help with some of the residence.

Meantime, Mr. Davis is calling on the government to offer compensations to facilities like these that have been badly affected by load shedding exercises.

CCTV Contract Signing Next Month

BY LEAH COOPER
Journal Staff Writer

Minister of National Security Marvin Dames announced yesterday that a contract for the implementation of CCTV to

assist with the country's crime fighting initiatives will be signed next month.

"I'm happy to report here today that a Bahamian company won this bid, and in a few

short weeks, we're about to sign the contract for CCTV. I think around the 2nd or 4th of September. That is also a Bahamian company," Mr. Dames said.

"One of the things we

often hear is that we don't focus on Bahamians. We sent across the world for people to bid and show us what they have," he said.

Mr. Dames added that this clearly demonstrates that the country has indi-

viduals who are capable of competing globally.

He also revealed that in a few short weeks the contract signings for drones and body cams are also expected to occur sometime next

month.

"They're all just about cleaned up now and now it's just a matter of signing. So, as a government this is what we promised to deliver and deliver we will," he said.

DPM Sets Record Straight Over False Claims

Deputy Prime Minister Peter Turnquest said the "malicious and defamatory" accusations circulating on social media about his family member are false.

He said in a statement yesterday that the accusations associate a member of his family with a matter before the court.

"I wish to state categorically that these fabricated claims are demonstrably false and completely untrue. They are a

gross attempt at character assassination by uncaring and unscrupulous cowards, political mischief making at its worst," Turnquest said.

"I caution the public to question the integrity of persons who make a habit out of generating and circulating these vexing stories with the intent of spreading false and defamatory information in the name of politics or irresponsible gossip."



► Deputy Prime Minister Peter Turnquest

Haitian Visa Distribution Suspended

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of The Commonwealth of The Bahamas wishes to inform the general public that due to current technical and other challenges, the issuance of visas to Haitian nationals has been suspended until further notice.

This does not include nationals who are officials, diplomats or holders of a United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Canadian or Schengen Visa.

The ministry apologizes for any inconveniences caused to the travelling public.

Back to school

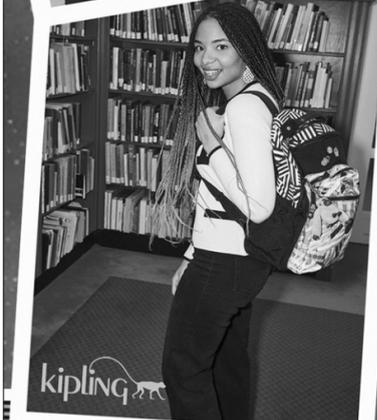


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Junior Doctors Strike

Continued from / PAGE 1...

holiday pay for junior doctors to cover the period from June 16, 2014 through October 31, 2018 at an amount approximating \$4.98 million.

"When they were called to the table and agreed that they would pay, we started receiving payments in one instance and then they stopped. We've started negotiations with them on and off for years to try regularize the holiday pay," Dr. Basset explained.

"Most recently, we sat down and decided we would write out back pay, the terms and conditions paying the doctors over the years they haven't been paid. The final agreement that PHA was able to reach is for payments over five payments and one availability. To us, that's unacceptable."

Standing in solidarity, a number of leaders of other unions came to the defense of the junior doctors. Nurses Union President Amancha Williams warned that PMH will shut down because of the constant stalling of pay.

"These matters and issues have been long gone. Meet the demands of the people. Why can't you come to the table and negotiate? Come to the

people and negotiate - not tomorrow," Williams said.

"You're putting the Bahamian public at risk. We have an infrastructure at the hospital - it's breaking down. The roof is caving in right now. We have bins up. This is the type of conditions we're working in. We say to the government take a step forward and look and resolve the issue of your people."

Also onboard is Trade Union Congress President Obie Ferguson, who said his union is in full support of the junior doctors and demanded negotiations yesterday.

"These are basic rights. These aren't issues that they ought to be out here for. The government of the Bahamas ought to move quickly," he said.

"Collective agreements are enforceable, once it's registered. So to try to put on the works a small industrial or private contract - to disregard the collective agreement is illegal. So, therefore, we ask the government to have those things corrected. So we're gonna be here until it's resolved"

Other union leaders such as Daniel Thompson, of the Union of Tertiary Educators of the Bahamas, National Congress of Trade Unions President Bernard



While standing in the rain, junior doctors at the Princess Margaret Hospital went on a strike yesterday demanding their holiday pay from the Public Hospitals Authority. (Journal Photo)



Evans and Bahamas Public Services Union President (BPSU) Kimsley Ferguson showed their support.

"If it's a fight that he

wants, it's a fight that he's going to get and of it takes squeaky wheels to get the oil trust me, the Bahamas Public Service Union is onboard with

our trade union colleagues and we're going to take the stand that is to cost our voices to be heard," Mr. Ferguson said.

Dr. Basset added that they are trying to reduce the impact of the strike on the public and asked the public to be tolerant with them.

PHA Owes Doctors

Continued from / PAGE 1...

mine who would've worked on holidays and weekends? Do you base it on a register? Do you base it on a statement from the doctor?" he asked.

Then, Dr. Sands said there is the issue of the years the doctors have been working at the hospital.

"Some doctors have been working a longer period and just start working there and that is something the party has not agreed," he said.

"PHA had agreed to put a lump sum to every doctor the same amount and then to move it forward to pay it proactively."

This problem has been made impossible for the parties to agree on the exact amount to pay individuals.

Moving forward, Dr. Sands will look into possibly having an independent third private party to look at the facts and direct negotiations.

He found the strike to be "unfortunate" as it impacts patients and the general public.

"There's now an incredibly for a matter that's already agreed. This is an acknowledged debt. It is going to be paid. The issue is how do you pay it?"

When asked if he will settle the negotiation yesterday, as union leaders have demanded, he said

he cannot "categorically" say.

"I will give this my attention and the full bread of this ministry to get this resolved as quickly as possible," Dr. Sands said.

"I can't instruct the unions to return, to work. I can only demonstrate the good faith, willingness of my office."

Wednesday morning, junior doctors stood in the rain for their strike.

President of the Doctors Union Dr. Melisande Bassett noted that all non-essential services were removed and only emergency staff remained on the job.

The strike will continue until holiday pay is negotiated.

'Enough is Enough'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

drew their services and walked off the job yesterday.

According to Ferguson, the strike came on the heels of a meeting with Prime Minister Dr. Hubert Minnis, where he informed that government would not meet the union's request which was a full lump sum payment to assist workers.

"You could look around you and you could see that these people have had it. We have people who have to make a conscience decision to either keep a roof over their heads or to buy food, much less prepare their

children for school," Mr. Ferguson said.

"So if the government wants a fight, a fight they will get."

According to Mr. Ferguson, there was an agreement with the prime minister to pay public servants and PMH employees some \$1,200, but there seemed to have been a misunderstanding.

"We expressed to the deputy prime minister that we've had this discussion with the prime minister and we were here with a view that he was going to give the treasury and the public service their instructions because they were present in the meeting, but

however it didn't go that way," Mr. Ferguson said.

"He had asked if we would accept the payment in two tranches. However, that was inconvenient to the officers who are challenged with preparing their kids for back to school.

"This is not money that we are asking for. This is money that we are deserving of because our industrial agreement is currently being negotiated.

"We are recognizing the fact that there are some stalling tactics with all of our negotiations when they reach the

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