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'Tourism's Hot'

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

As visitor arrivals in The Bahamas continue to increase, Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguilar assured that "tourism is hot" and predicted that more than seven million tourists will visit the country this year.

"And, because tourism is so hot, our economy is growing and creating more and more employment opportunities for our young people!" D'Aguilar said, during his address at the opening



▶ Minister of Tourism Dionisio D'Aguilar addressed the Free National Movement's Torchbearers Youth Convention on Thursday at the Melia Nassau Beach Resort. (Journal Photo)

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Minimum Wage Disagreement 'Inexplicable'



▶ PLP Chairman Fred Mitchell

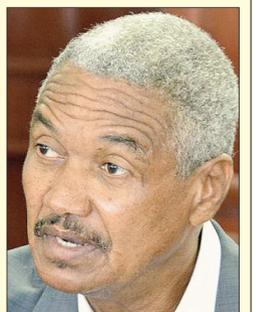
BY EARYEL BOWLEG
 Journal Staff Writer

Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) Chairman Fred Mitchell said it's "inexplicable" that Cabinet ministers are unable to come to an agreement over whether minimum wage should be increased.

"On Tuesday 13

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Miller Calls for Truth on BPL



▶ Former MP Leslie Miller

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

Former Bahamas Electricity Corporation (BEC) Chairman Leslie Miller called for the "lies" on Bahamas Power and Light (BPL) to stop.

"This foolishness about these old engines is just one part of BEC. That's Station A. That

■ See page 2...

A Future Secured

BY DEANDRE WILLIAMSON
 Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Education Jeffrey Lloyd promised the nation's youth that their future is secured under the Free National Movement (FNM) government which has made progress in providing access to free education and employment opportunities.

During his keynote address at the FNM's Torchbearers Youth Convention at Melia Nassau Beach Resort yesterday, Lloyd reminded young people that the government is investing



▶ Minister of Education Jeffrey Lloyd assured young people of their secured future with the Free National Movement at the Torchbearers Youth Association convention yesterday. (Journal Photo)

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Virtual School for MICAL

\$60 Million School Repair Contracts

BY LEAH COOPER
 Journal Staff Writer

Minister of Education Jeffrey Lloyd revealed the government's plan to tackle the educational

challenges in the MICAL constituency, which includes the implementation of a virtual school.

During his address at the 2019 Torchbearers

Youth Association Convention yesterday, Lloyd said it is challenging to place teachers in the respective islands and schools included in the

MICAL constituency.

"Many of those students are not able to take the nine, or 10, or 11 BGCSE exams because they don't have those

courses. And they don't have those courses because they don't have those teachers. This year,

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ALL THE NEWS YOU NEED TO READ IN THE MORNING

PHA Disappointed in BPSU

The Public Hospitals Authority (PHA) expressed disappointment in the Bahamas Public Services Union (BPSU) over confidentiality in mutual agreements and denied claims made by the union's president concerning negotiation meetings.

"The Public Hospitals Authority has been made aware of comments attributed to the Bahamas Public Services Union's President, Mr. Kimsley Ferguson published in a recent article in the local dailies which speaks to the current negotiation status between the PHA and the

BPSU for a new BPSU industrial agreement," a statement issued by PHA read.

"The PHA and the BPSU both agreed to strict confidentiality concerning the matters being discussed between both parties. To-date, the PHA has maintained this position but finds it disappointing that the BPSU has not.

"While the PHA will continue to honor the confidentiality of our mutual discussions, we feel it necessary to speak to the BPSU's statement that the negotiation meetings are being continuously postponed and

that as a result negotiation on a counter proposal have stalled for almost 10 weeks. The PHA categorically denies these claims. At the onset of negotiations, both parties agreed to specific conditions to ensure a proper, cordial engagement over the term of the negotiation period, including a separation of negotiations into non-financial and financial matters."

According to PHA, the non-financial teams were scheduled to meet twice per month, every other Friday.

"While a first meeting of the non-financial team was held on November

23, 2018, it was agreed by both parties that formal meetings would begin in earnest on January 11, owing to the busy holiday season," the statement read.

"Commencing with the January 11 meeting, there were a total of 12 negotiation meetings held, some of which were held on dates other than originally agreed due to scheduling conflicts by both parties. Our records reflect that one meeting was cancelled due to a no-show by the BPSU, while four other dates were postponed by mutual agreement. There were no

instances where the PHA acted alone and cancelled any negotiation meeting. The final non-financial meeting took place on July 30, 2019.

"The financial teams agreed to continue the twice per month schedule adopted by the non-financial teams, with our first meeting scheduled for August 9. Regrettably, the PHA requested a deferment of that meeting in order to allow members of the PHA's financial team to attend another function in support of a senior official of the PHA, a key participant in the

financial negotiation meetings.

"While a deferment was requested, the PHA offered to either extend the next two scheduled meetings by an additional hour or to meet twice in one week to make up for the deferred meeting. The PHA remains committed to the negotiation process with the BPSU and other stakeholder groups as we recognize the importance of negotiations and collaborative agreement to ensure that our employee benefits are maximized within the financial constraints of the PHA."

'Tourism's Hot'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

of the Free National Movement's Torchbearers Youth Convention at Melia Nassau Beach Resort on Thursday evening.

"Ever since I was appointed the minister of tourism, some two short years ago, the tourism sector has boomed! The growth in visitor arrivals has been nothing short of exceptional. In fact, I deemed 2018 as a historic year for the Bahamian economy in that, 6.6 million foreign visitors made The Bahamas their vacation destination, the most foreign visitors to come to The Bahamas in any one year, in the history of this country!"

According to D'Aguilar, tourism's statistics for the first six months of 2019 are in and the phenomenal growth in tourism arrival numbers

continues.

"So, let me make some predictions for 2019. Let me tell you why your future is secured! Barring any major weather events, I predict we'll achieve many new records in 2019," the minister of tourism said.

"Stopover visitor arrivals will achieve a new record in 2019. Cruise passenger arrivals will achieve a new record in 2019. Arrivals into New Providence will achieve a new record in 2019. Arrivals into the Family Islands will achieve a new record in 2019.

"I predict that over seven million foreign visitors will come to The Bahamas in 2019. If that happens, FNMs, you know what that means? Since the FNM took office and Dionisio James D'Aguilar, member of parliament for Freetown became the minister of tourism and Hubert

Alexander Minnis became the prime minister of the Commonwealth of The Bahamas, over one million more foreign visitors per year will be. Over one million more, per year!

"So, if you pass me in the hallways of this convention or conversely out on the streets of Freetown and you want to give me a new nickname, may I suggest you say, 'Hey one million more man!' or 'Hey seven million man.' Say that and everyone in The Bahamas will understand what you talking about!"

D'Aguilar also pointed out that employment in the tourism sector increased by 24 percent and encouraged the youth to take advantage of the business opportunities emanating from the economic growth.

"Over 20,000 cruise passengers visit a destination somewhere in The

Bahamas every single day! Think of the business opportunities this presents to up and coming entrepreneurs. And many of these foreign visitors are just looking for something experiential. So, put on your thinking cap, and create an opportunity for yourself," he said.

"As for the Family Islands, many, many hotel

and restaurant projects abound. So, if you want to go back to the Family Island of your roots or simply settle in a Family Island to get away from the hustle and bustle of Nassau, tourism-related projects, especially in the development of your very own Airbnb type products, present you with numerous employment and

entrepreneurial opportunities.

"The explosion in offerings of accommodations and car rentals and boat rentals to our foreign visitors has blown open the ability of hard working Bahamians to finally eat a piece of this Tourism pie. So, young FNMs, make sure you get a piece of this pie."

Miller Calls for Truth on BPL

Continued from / PAGE 1...

had the old engines out of Germany. They were not used often at BEC. They were rarely a part of the mix," Mr. Miller said yesterday, while appearing as a guest on Love 97's radio talk show Issues of the Day.

"The problem we have in New Providence now is the fact that people failed to address and the corporation has failed to address the fact that when they had that fire down at Clifton Pier, they lost almost 70 megawatts of power."

The former PLP Cabinet minister went on to explain that upon coming into office, the PLP

discovered that the former Ingraham administration was renting engines from the South American company Aggreko.

He said these generators gave the Baillou Hills Power station 20 megawatts of power.

"They said they didn't have the money to fix it. So, it was easier for them to rent it instead of doing the work that would justify the necessary things that needed to be done at Clifton Pier," he said.

"To tell these boldfaced lies, is so unfair. The Bahamian people aren't interested in who rented the engines and what was spent. They want their lights on."

Going back a bit into

the power company's history, Mr. Miller claimed that under the last Ingraham administration, no serious overhaul was done on the company's engines for nearly two years and its chairman never held meetings with executives.

Fast forward to where the company stands today, Mr. Miller charged that it will take about 12 to 18 months to establish a new plant.

If he was still in control, Mr. Miller said he would call the company's engine manufacturers, assess both the Clifton Pier and Baillou Hills plants and bring in the necessary resources to correct the problem.

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BETA CAMP PARTNERS WITH SUN OIL TO PROMOTE ENGINEERING CAREERS

Students gain exposure to careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) during week-long interactive summer camp with funding provided by Sun Oil Limited, a Shell licensee.

The Bahamas Engineering and Technology Advancement (BETA) Camp brought together students interested in STEM related careers. BETA Camp was co-founded by engineers Trenicka Rolle and D'André Wilson-Ihejirika. Rolle highlighted that the excitement of participants along with their persistent spirit created the ideal environment for teaching and learning in the STEM field. The co-founder stated, "When I see the students get excited, I am in awe of their curiosity and energy to learn. BETA Camp ignited a passion for science and math that we hope encourages participants to solve complex problems and challenges in the future."

The mission of BETA camp is to use technical expertise to inspire and improve The Bahamas through a series of collaborative efforts that will strengthen STEM education across the nation, create opportunities for engineers and address vital



► Andre Moss, Sun Oil Engineer; Trenicka Rolle, BETA Camp Co-Founder and Rufus Johnson Jr., Sun Oil Marketing Manager

infrastructure issues on our Bahama islands. According to Rolle, "Our mission speaks directly to creating opportunities for individuals to be inspired from throughout all islands of The Bahamas and we are grateful to all of our sponsors who help us to achieve this goal." Rolle elaborated, "We particularly value our partnership with Sun Oil Limited because throughout the past five years, they have sponsored par-

ticipants from Family Islands including Abaco, Eleuthera, Exuma and San Salvador. This makes a positive difference because kids from all of our islands are being exposed to careers in engineering that are vital to the sustainability of our nation."

Andre Moss, Engineering Projects and Health, Safety, Security and Engineering Manager at Sun Oil Limited, attended the

BETA Camp participant final presentations. Moss applauded the camp as a forward thinking and innovative approach towards nurturing the next generation of Bahamian engineers. He said, "At Sun Oil, we are invested in our community and recognize our responsibility to support initiatives that create opportunities for the next generation of Bahamian engineers." Moss expressed, "Through our

leading role and visionary efforts to provide quality petroleum products, we seek to cultivate a stronger interest within the next generation of young men and women who will pursue their passions in the areas of science and technology. This subsequently improves the quality of life for Bahamians and affirms our organization commitment to fuelling journeys that matter." Rolle concluded,

"Through our partnership with Sun Oil, we are hopeful that many of our BETA Camp participants will eventually fill the need for chemical and mechanical engineers within their organization and others too. Together, we can make a positive difference towards igniting a greater enthusiasm and investment of resources for student advancement and achievement in the STEM fields."



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A Future Secured

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\$360 million in education this year.

In addition, he announced that the country is moving toward universal pre-primary education.

Lloyd explained that the government invested millions of dollars in providing free preschool education by facilitating the free enrollment of three and four-year-old students.

"We saw that students that entered school at age five with no prior education were at a disadvantage. So your visionary and caring FNM government invested millions of dollars in converting vacant rooms across the system into specially designed pre-primary facilities.

"Additionally, we engaged a number of qualified private pre-school programs to assist where government facilities were not readily available in New Providence and Grand Bahama, Abaco and Andros and were able to provide free quality pre-primary education to a total of 800 students.

"In fact, before the



Free National Movement supporters flocked the Melia Nassau Beach Resort on Thursday for the Torchbearers Youth Association convention. (Journal Photo)

2012 general election, the PLP promised to double the investment in education, but that never happened! My fellow Bahamians, let's look at the facts! According to the Central Bank of the Bahamas, in the PLP's first fiscal year, they invested \$276 million in education, compared to our \$313 million. In their second fiscal year, they

invested \$265 million in education, compared to our \$331 million. In their third fiscal year, they invested \$303 million dollars in education, compared to our whopping \$351 million. I'm talking about a future secured!

The minister of education also pointed out that the government promised to finance students to

access tertiary education and delivered by providing \$20 million in scholarships for university and college level training.

"This government, your government, in two years created a new Tertiary Educational Grant by providing students access to free university education at the University of the Bahamas and more to

come next year. UB is free! UB is free!" Lloyd said.

"We demonstrated our belief in of our Family Island students by providing them a \$500 accommodation voucher. When they leave their homes to travel to New Providence to study, they have the means to find affordable, suitable accommodation where

they can feel safe and secure. This is how you believe in Bahamians – you invest in them.

"I'm talking about access granted for a free university education for all and not just the select few. Granted complete access!

"Take a seat on this ride, and look over at the Bahamas Technical Vocational Institute (BTVI). In August of 2018, your FNM government spent \$2.6 million to make available 1,200 scholarships to students who enrolled in BTVI full time in technical and vocational courses and now, today, thanks to a \$4.1 million allocation in the 2019/2020 budget, more Bahamians will receive free education at BTVI.

"Those who meet a minimum standard, no BGCSE required, and a desire to take charge of their future can just apply and they will be on their way. I urge those who have not done so to get onboard the BTVI train for free."

The convention continues tomorrow under theme, 'A Future Secured, Access Granted'.

Virtual School for MICAL

Continued from / PAGE 1...

for that constituency, there will be virtual school in MICAL. Virtual classrooms in MICAL," he said.

"Technology will rule

the day in education. Education being transformed, \$17 million invested by this FNM in digitizing our educational system. A revolution is underway in education."

This year, the education minister said the government will invest \$360 million in education.

"As a matter of fact, this summer, hundreds of small business owners

have secured contracts with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Works for summer school repairs to the tune of \$60 million on the ground this summer in The Bahamas," he said.

Minimum Wage Disagreement 'Inexplicable'

Continued from / PAGE 1...

August 2019, the Minister of Labour Dion Foulkes opined that the government had begun a discussion on the raise of the minimum wage. Today, the public was treated to the answer from 'Dr. No' in the government, Peter Turnquest, who said that unequivocally, a minimum wage increase would not happen. So who are we to believe?" Mitchell said yesterday.

"We draw this disagreement around the Cabinet table to the attention of the public as yet another sign of an FNM government in disarray. Members of the Cabinet are unable to get their policies aligned with one another."

The last minimum wage increase was ordered by former Minister of Labour Shane Gibson under the PLP in 2015.

"The increase was 40 percent. This was done in order to soften the effects of implementing the VAT, to ease the burden of new taxation. The same ought to have been done by this government in the face of their 60 percent VAT hike," Mitchell explained.

"Indeed, the PLP is proposing to go further and that is to work toward a livable wage for employees in this country.

"The facts now also show that notwithstanding all the crowing from the rafters about the drop in the unemployment figures, the PLP was right to warn them in our statement not to pop the champagne

corks too early. It turns out that the number of people who are unemployed in the country is greater than when the FNM came to office in 2017. It turns out that economically, we are simply marking time and standing still. The so called growth in the economy is turning out to be fiction.

"The Progressive Young Liberals use the phrase: 'No lie lasts forever'

"It certainly seems that as slow is it may be, the truth is coming out about the deceptions of the Free National Movement."

Turnquest revealed at a press conference on Wednesday that the government has not given any detailed consideration on increasing minimum wage as the government believes it is unnecessary, according to its data.

"We, of course, know that there has been some increase in the cost of living as a result of the increase of the value added tax and the deflection rate shows that, but the trend also shows that is evening out and as we expect over time it will start to normalize," Mr. Turnquest explained.

"It's a function how we can see the economy perform, how any minimum increase would affect are current growth projection, and it will mean to the increase in the cost of living as a result in the potential increase in the wage and what dampening affect that may have on employment and the economy."

TORCHBEARERS YOUTH CONVENTION



Prime Minister Dr. Hubert A. Minnis and his wife Patrica Minnis, along with other Cabinet Ministers attend the Free National Movement Torchbearers Association Youth Convention at the Melia Nassau Beach Resort on Thursday. (Journal Photo)