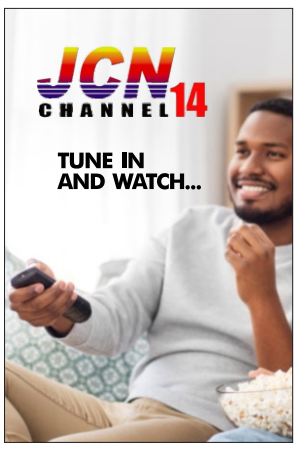


The Bahama Journal
Quo Vadis, Bahamas?



FRIDAY, OCTOBER 16TH, 2026



IMPETIGO CASES ON THE DECLINE



Dr. Michael Darville
Minister of Health and Wellness,

BY MAKEIRA TUCKER
Journal Staff Writer

The number of cases of impetigo, the highly contagious skin infection that causes itching and is quite unsightly which caused schools in the country to close temporarily has now decreased tremendously, according to the Minister of Health and Wellness, Dr. Michael Darville. He reported the news to the media during a press conference at the Office of The Prime Minister Thursday morning.

"This morning, as a direct result through proven public health measures, I'm pleased to report that the number of newly reported cases of impetigo has declined significantly," said Dr. Darville.

The skin infection is non-life threatening and is often referred to as the "school sore" because it is most common within school-aged children and spreads very easily from child to child in close settings like schools and child centers.

According to Dr. Darville, the impetigo outbreak required collaborative action, and the Ministry of Health and Wellness, in partnership with Ministry of Education Science and Technology hosted a Zoom meeting focused on the proper management of the skin infection within school systems.

"During that engagement, the acting Director of Public Health, supported by School Health Services and our National Surveillance Unit provided guidance on prevention, treatment and management of impetigo," Dr. Darville explained.

He added that the meeting consisted of senior school administrators and attracted more than 130 participants.

Dr. Darville noted the engagement strengthens the connection between health and education coordinators, ensuring that public school health coordinators receive consistent public health guidance.

The minister also urged parents and guardians to seek medical assistance if their child displays symptoms of impetigo because early detection allows students to recover faster, get back in school sooner and reduce the risks of transmission.

"If you notice unusual sores, blisters and crusted lesions on your child's skin please seek medical advice from your primary healthcare provider," he said.

"Our clinics and staff are on high alert and willing to assist all who present," Dr. Darville added.

Story Cont. Pg.2

DAVIS ANNOUNCES HISTORIC BUDGET SURPLUS

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor



Prime Minister, Hon. Philip Davis, KC

Despite their ambitions no Bahamian Government had ever achieved a fiscal budget surplus, that is until now. When the Parliamentarians met this week Prime Minister Philip Davis during a communication where he tabled the Ministry of Finance Monthly Fiscal Summary Report for June 2026 announced that the government closed the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 in surplus.

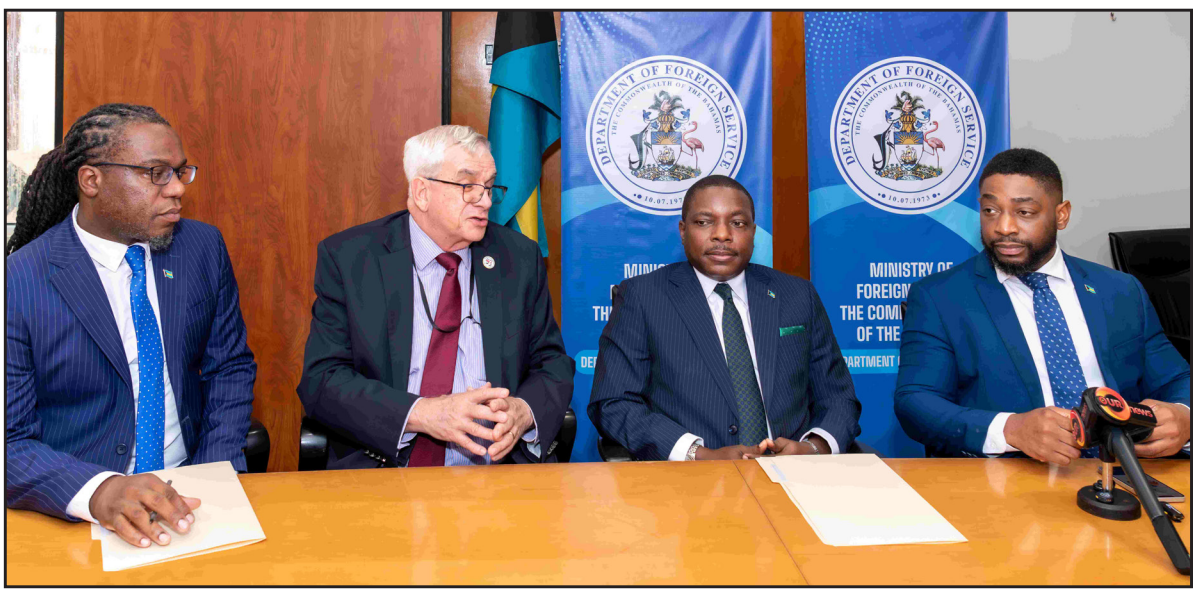
"It is the first fiscal surplus recorded in an independent Bahamas," said Mr. Davis.

For the 2025/2026 fiscal year, the government initially projected a budget surplus of $75 million, which was later adjusted to just under $70 million.

The official Opposition Free National Movement (FNM) expressed skepticism that the government would meet its projections. This doubt was made even more clear when the government reported a $324.4 million deficit during the 2025-2026 mid-year budget presentation, though that figure represented an improvement compared to the previous year's deficit which stood at $367.7 million at the mid-year.

Story Cont. Pg.2

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PREPARES TO LAUNCH DIPLOMATIC WEEK



Diplomatic Week Press Conference Accouncement 14th October, 2026.
Photographed from left - Kemie Jones, PS David Cates, Hon. Jomo Campbell Minister of Agriculture, and Barry Griffin

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Immigration is hosting Diplomatic Week 2026, an event that helps outline and shape the country's foreign policy.

For the past 14 years, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has held Diplomatic Week, bringing together ambassadors, honorary consuls, foreign partners, and other stakeholders to meet, collaborate, and communicate foreign policy.

Diplomatic Week 2026 will be held October 18 to October 22 at Margaritaville Resort, downtown.

With last year's theme focused on security, Trade Commission Chairman and this year's Diplomatic Week Chair Barry Griffin, said this year's conference theme targets trade.

"The theme for this year is 'Orange, Blue, and Green Economies, New Frontiers for Trade and Economic Development.'

Story Cont. Pg.2

DAVIS ANNOUNCES HISTORIC BUDGET SURPLUS

Story Cont. Pg.1

In an effort to explain the significance of the achievement the Prime Minister reminded of the challenges the nation has overcome to reach this milestone. "I recall them because the Bahamian people deserve an honest measure of the distance this country has travelled. The vessel we were entrusted with in 2021 was taking on water and sinking. The work of repair was steady and sustained."

He explained that in fiscal year 2021-22, as the country still contended with the economic fallout of the pandemic, the deficit fell to $721.7 million, or 5.5 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In fiscal year 2022-23 it was reduced to $534.6 million, or 3.6 percent of GDP, and fell further to $194.0 million, or 1.2 percent of GDP, in fiscal year 2023-24, and to $84.8 million, or 0.5 percent of GDP, in fiscal year 2024-25.

"For the fiscal year just ended," he said, "I am pleased to report that the Government recorded a surplus of $39.3 million, equivalent to 0.2 percent of GDP. In the space of five fiscal years, the public finances have moved from a deficit of 12.5 percent of GDP to a surplus. No previous Government of an independent Bahamas has recorded a fiscal surplus. This one was achieved, moreover, in an election year, when the temptation to loosen the public purse is greatest."

Mr. Davis reported that total revenue for FY2025-2026 reached $3.96 billion, an increase of 16.6 percent over the previous year and 101.7 percent of budget.

Tax revenue rose by 13.0 percent to $3.42 billion, with gains across the major categories. Value Added Tax, the principal source of Government revenue, increased by 14.9 percent to $1.65 billion.

He said taxes on international trade and transactions rose by 4.3 percent to $908.9 million, reflecting continued growth in tourism arrivals and domestic demand.

While non-tax revenue grew by 45.4 percent to $543.3 million, driven primarily by higher property income and increased collections from the sale of Government goods and services.

According to the Prime Minister total expenditure rose by 12.6 percent to $3.92 billion. Recurrent expenditure increased by 9.7 percent to $3.51 billion, reflecting higher spending on compensation of employees, goods and services, subsidies and social assistance.

He said, "That spending sustained the delivery of essential public services, supported vulnerable households and invested in the public sector workforce, and the public payroll was nonetheless held within budget."

Continuing he said, "The pattern within the year is instructive. The first six months recorded deficits, as they customarily do, given the seasonal timing of our revenues. From January onward, the position strengthened and held, with a surplus in every month through to June. The final quarter alone produced a surplus of $196.6 million."

June concluded the year on a particularly strong note. Total revenue for the month rose by $467.0 million, or 150.7 percent, to $777.1 million compared with June 2025."

According to Mr. Davis, tax revenue increased by $307.2 million, led by a rise of $135.2 million in VAT collections that included the settlement of outstanding arrears while taxes on financial and capital transactions rose by $35.3 million, mainly from stamp duty on share transfers.

He said, taxes on international trade and transactions increased by $44.4 million on the strength of departure tax and excise duty receipts, non-tax revenue rose by $159.8 million, driven by dividend receipts, most of which were applied to settling outstanding Government obligations.

On the expenditure side, The Prime Minister explained that the recurrent spending in June rose by $279.0 million to $547.6 million, largely reflecting goods and services and subsidy payments. While capital expenditure for the month increased by $82.7 million to $98.7 million and the Government recorded a surplus of $130.7 million in June, compared with $25.4 million in June of last year.

Mr. Davis said the result of a surplus was achieved because it was "the product of deliberate policy."

He said, "This Government chose to strengthen revenue by improving collection and compliance rather than by imposing new burdens on households already under pressure. Collecting taxes already owed under existing law is a question of fairness to the many Bahamians and businesses who meet their obligations in full and on time. We also brought our tax system into line with the new international framework."

Davis explained that the Domestic Minimum Top-Up Tax applies the globally agreed fifteen percent minimum rate to large multinational groups operating in The Bahamas. Newly implemented this year, it contributed $68.6 million in June, revenue that would otherwise have been collected by other jurisdictions, he said.

The Prime Minister also wanted to make it clear that the government was able to achieve a surplus without cutting back on investments. He said, "Capital expenditure expanded by 45.2 percent to $414.9 million for the year. That investment went into roads, public buildings, airports supported by the IDB project, education, health, technology and other strategic infrastructure, alongside the Government's own airport infrastructure programme."

"I have long held that national progress must reach every island, and the Family Islands have shared in this work. The year has shown that fiscal consolidation and economic growth can advance together,'" said Mr. Davis.

According to Mr. Davis the national debt has also been managed with equal care. He explained that dividend income received in June was largely applied to settling the Government's obligations to suppliers, contractors and businesses.

Additionally, he said all new borrowing in June was raised domestically and that the government repaid $77.0 million in advances from the Central Bank, made a net repayment of $18.3 million in foreign currency debt, and placed $46.5 million in sinking funds for future debt obligations.

"Over the past eighteen months, through active liability management, we have replaced more expensive external debt with less expensive debt," he said.

The Prime Minister also took delight in the government "continually outperforming" projections of the IMF and other credit agencies.

He said his administration will continue to raise the standard of fiscal reporting so that the state of the nation's finances is visible to every citizen and every investor.

"The Government will continue to modernise revenue administration, to reform public enterprises, to reduce the cost of the national debt, to improve the transparency of fiscal reporting, and to invest in the infrastructure of every island," said Mr. Davis.

As for the surplus the Opposition rejected the numbers accusing the government of omitting millions of dollars in borrowed money including the more than $700 million that was deposited into the National Investment Fund.

FNM leader Michael Pintard described the budget surplus as "absolute fiction, while the FNM Member for East Grand Bahama Kwasi Thompson described the surplus as "a false surplus."

In conclusion Prime Minister Davis said, "I do not come to this House in a spirit of celebration. The voyage is not complete, and a responsible captain does not mistake a calmer stretch of water for the safe harbour. Yet the progress is real, and the Bahamian people should take confidence from it. In 2021 this administration was entrusted with a vessel taking on water in the middle of a storm, carrying a deficit of 12.5 percent of GDP. Five years on, the books are in surplus for the first time in our history as an independent nation, the course is steady, and the world has taken notice."

For the upcoming 2026/2027 fiscal year, the government has projected a budget surplus of $223.1 million.

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OPPOSITION REJECTS BUDGET SURPLUS NUMBERS

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor

The Opposition Free National Movement (FNM) is not impressed by the Prime Minister's announcement that the government has achieved a historic budget surplus, the first in the nation's history.

While in Parliament on Wednesday the FNM Member of Parliament for East Grand Bahama Kwasi Thompson said while the government boasts about a surplus there are still concerns when it comes to accountability especially in relation to the National Investment Fund (NIF).

Mr. Thompson said the numbers used to claim that there is a budget surplus are not accurate.

Using a portion of his contribution to the Anti-Terrorism Amendment Bill 2026 which the Opposition supports and was passed in the House of Assembly Mr. Thompson addressed the FNM's concerns about the government's announcement of a budget surplus and the credibility of the numbers.

He said, "Credibility is important, and we still have an outstanding question on the $700 million with respect to the National Investment Fund (NIF). We also have a question-and this relates directly to the surplus; where the Member for St. Barnabas (Michael Halkitis-Minister of Finance) came and said that $310 million was spent on capital investments. The same type of expenditure that is in the budget. So, that $310 million was not included in the budgetary process when you assessed your surplus.

"So, you can pat yourself on the back and say that you have gotten a surplus, but you have not taken account of all of the spending. You have not taken account of the $310 million of spending. And if you don't take account of that, then it's a surplus on paper, but in reality, you still are operating in a deficit. It is a false surplus. It is not a surplus that I believe is grounded in the entire picture being put before the country," said Mr. Thompson.

During a Communication to the House Members Prime Minister Philip Davis said "For the fiscal year just ended, I am pleased to report that the Government recorded a surplus of $39.3 million, equivalent to 0.2 percent of Gross Domestic Product in the space of five fiscal years, the public finances have moved from a deficit of 12.5 percent of GDP to a surplus. No previous Government of an independent Bahamas has recorded a fiscal surplus. This one was achieved, moreover, in an election year, when the temptation to loosen the public purse is greatest."

However, Mr. Thompson chided the government for what he said is celebrating a surplus when state owned entities like the Princess Margaret Hospital (PMH) is in disarray and nurses need to be paid; he described it as an "empty surplus because you still have so many needs in the country."

Mr. Thompson questioned whether the government's outstanding bills surpass the $39.3 million it announced as a surplus. He said, "If so, then there is no surplus. The question is, did you withhold paying those items so you could secure the surplus? We should understand the whole picture."

Thompson argued that any budget surplus should not be celebrated until the government solves the high cost of living, in terms of fuel, food, electricity, medicine, housing and other areas of life in The Bahamas.

Prime Minister Davis standing on a point of order rebuked the member for East Grand Bahama for suggesting he would tell untruths to the Bahamian people. He encouraged the Opposition to take a closer look at the information regarding the surplus before commenting.

He said, "Look at the accounts that have been prepared by the same individuals who worked for you when you were the Minister of Finance, we did not prepare the accounts, they did, and you are casting in appropriate conduct to the fine professionals in the Ministry of Finance who worked for you, when you start saying the numbers aren't true."

However, Thompson remained adamant that the numbers provided to reach the surplus were not inclusive of the $310 million taken from the NIF because of a "policy decision" by the government which brings credibility into question.

The Prime Minister encouraged him to allow the Public Accounts Committee which is investigating the matter to do its job and report its findings.

Standing on a point of order Opposition Leader Michael Pintard also took the position that the budget surplus is not accurate.

He said, "The surplus he (Prime Minister) talks about is contrived, it's fiction. When he talks about poli-tricks he is the master of that, when he talks about being creative, he has creative numbers; and it is not the civil servants who he wishes to say that we are blaming-we blame him. No matter the smile and the affability, that doesn't mean that you are being accurate about what you are saying, because he is not being accurate about what he says."

Continuing Mr. Pintard said, "What is true is that the NIF is an account created by the Prime Minister and it is the Ministry of Finance and the Treasury that is managing that. So, when the member for East Grand Bahama talks about that there is no surplus, he has good justification to say so. Because all of that money, hundreds of millions that are being spent through that particular fund, again is under control of the Ministry of Finance and therefore if it had been registered in the budget the way it ought to have been registered, he would have been ashamed to come here and talk about surplus. There is no surplus, it is absolute fiction."

The Prime Minister reported that total revenue for fiscal year 2025-2026 reached $3.96 billion, an increase of 16.6 percent over the previous year and 101.7 percent of budget. He added that tax revenue rose by 13.0 percent to $3.42 billion, with gains across the major categories.

Value Added Tax, the principal source of Government revenue, increased by 14.9 percent to $1.65 billion.

According to the Prime Minister total expenditure rose by 12.6 percent to $3.92 billion. Recurrent expenditure increased by 9.7 percent to $3.51 billion, reflecting higher spending on compensation of employees, goods and services, subsidies and social assistance.

For the upcoming 2026/2027 fiscal year, the government has projected a budget surplus of $223.1 million.



Kwasi Thompson
Member of Parliament for East Grand Bahama

IMPETIGO CASES ON THE DECLINE

Story Cont. Pg.1

Some practices to reduce the risks of impetigo include regular handwashing, keeping infected areas clean and covered, avoiding scratching and not sharing personal items such as towels.

Dr. Darvill also encourages teachers and administrators to continue good hygiene practices by maintaining appropriate cleaning measures and communicating properly with parents about a child displaying symptoms.

"Teacher you are not expected to diagnose impetigo, but you will play an important role in identifying children who may need additional medical assistance," Darville added.

He continued, "Children affected by this bacterial skin infection should not be stigmatized. It is a common treatable infection, and we see it every year."

According to Philp Swann, acting Director of Public Health, approximately 70 cases of impetigo were reported in The Bahamas from August to October 2026, which is less than the reported cases last year.

Schools where reported outbreaks occurred include were Gambier Primary, Samuel Guy Pinder, and E.P Roberts are temporarily closed for sanitization.

Dr. Darville stated that they will continue to work closely with the Ministry of Education Science and Technology to monitor the skin infection ensuring the safety for all students and administration.

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MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PREPARES TO LAUNCH DIPLOMATIC WEEK

Mr. Griffin said The Bahamas has great talent and potential in natural resources and human resources. Thus, the event aims to strengthen the country's human resources for the orange economy and its natural resources for the blue and green economies. Mr. Griffin also said several ministries will participate in Diplomatic Week.

"Foreign Affairs is the principal ministry convening Diplomatic Week, but due to the nature of the theme and topic of Diplomatic Week this year, the Ministry of Culture, Arts, and Heritage will be involved.

"We'll have involvement from the Ministry of Agriculture and Marine Resources.

"We will also have involvement from the Ministry of Economic Affairs.

"All of these ministries help to play a key role in deciding the country's economic policy and foreign policy," the Trade Commission Chairman said.

Mr. Griffin also said Prime Minister, the Hon. Philip Davis will be the keynote speaker at the opening ceremony. Key members of the government and the private sector will also participate throughout the week via video engagement and formal speaking sessions.

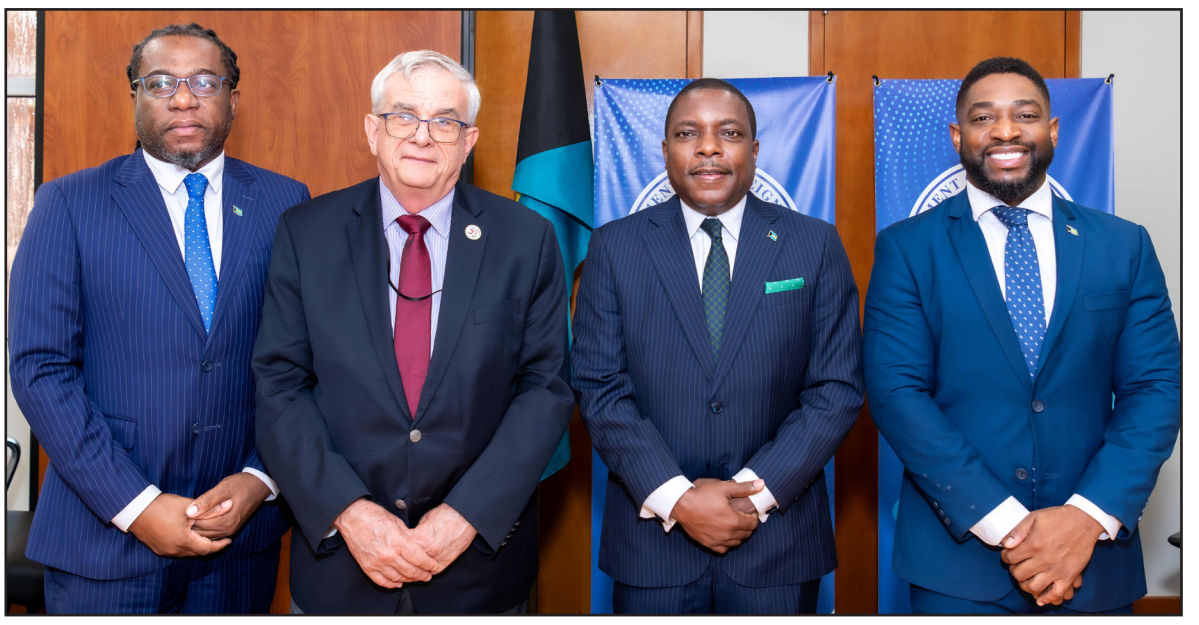
The opening ceremony for Diplomatic Week will be at 1:00 p.m. on October 19, and will be followed by discussions on the orange economy, with a panel entitled 'The Orange Economy as National Power.'

Mr. Griffin said the focus will shift to the country's film and creative production industry and our content creation industry. The event will also focus on Junkanoo and arts and crafts industries. Minister of Culture, Arts, and Heritage, the Hon. Leslia Miller-Brice, will deliver a formal address on the conference's first substantive day.

Mr. Griffin also said on Tuesday, October 20, the focus will be on the blue and green economies. Panels will introduce and reveal the current Bahamian direction of the blue and green economies in climate diplomacy.

On Wednesday, October 21, the focus will be on trade. A private sector panel will give a trade outlook from the Bahamian private sector perspective. Another panel will deal with shipping and logistics. Private-sector professionals in shipping and logistics will discuss issues affecting trade with The Bahamas. Mr. Griffin said two ministers will speak that day: Minister of Economic Affairs, Sen. the Hon. Jerome Fitzgerald, and Minister of Innovation and National Development, the Hon. Sebastian Bastian, who will speak on AI and Trade opportunities.

Mr. Griffin also said he and the Bahamas Trade Commission will speak on several trade-related issues, including fisheries, the Bahamas' largest export.



Photographed from left - Kemie Jones, PS David Cates, Hon. Jomo Campbell Minister of Agriculture, and Barry Griffin

Minister of Agriculture and Marine Resources, the Hon. Jomo Campbell, who also announced Diplomatic Week, expressed gratitude that the blue and green economies held a central place at the foreign service event, and anticipation in showing the benefits these economies have to offer Bahamians.

"I'm truly pleased to join you for this press briefing ahead of Diplomatic Week 2026, and I'm particularly thankful that the blue and green economies are taking center stage. We, for years, always talked about our sun, sand, and sea. And now, this is an opportunity to show the diplomatic community and the wider world how our marine resources, agriculture, and natural environment can contribute to a more prosperous future for The Bahamas," said the Agriculture Minister.

The Minister also said The Bahamas has recognized that growing these economies can create new income sources, strengthen food security, expand trade, and help more Bahamians build successful businesses. He said these opportunities for Bahamian entrepreneurs, investors, foreign partners, and international collaborators can develop businesses, strengthen infrastructure, and bring expertise and technology in the blue and green economies. He said Diplomatic Week will establish such collaborations, and he and his ministry desire Bahamians to benefit.

"We want our diplomatic relationships to open doors for training, technical cooperation, investment, and market access, with clear benefits for Bahamian communities and businesses," Minister Campbell said.

The Minister invited farmers, fishers, entrepreneurs, students, educators, and everyone interested in the blue and green economies to attend Diplomatic Week. He also invited investors and potential partners to engage with the discussions and explore where they can contribute.

In attendance were the Permanent Secretary, Department of Foreign Service, David Cates, CD; and the Deputy Director General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Kemie Jones.

GOVERNMENT SEEKING LOWER RATES FOR GBPC LOAN

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor

The Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) came to office with a clear and ambitious vision to reform the nation's energy sector, and since 2021 it has taken on a number of bold initiatives including rebuilding the electricity grid on New Providence, taking steps to transition to liquified natural gas (LNG), entering a number of power purchase agreements that will largely rely on renewable energy to power Family Island economies and the latest move which was to purchase majority ownership of the Grand Bahama Power Company.

The latter has drawn some criticisms with concerns that the government may be biting off more than it can handle, especially when considering the financial and operation challenges at Bahamas Power and Light (BPL).

This week in Parliament the government took steps to refinance $131.8 million in existing GBPC loan obligations alongside broader energy refinancing resolutions.

On the 23rd of March this year, Parliament approved a resolution authorising the Government to guarantee the borrowings of the Grand Bahama Energy Company (GBEC) through a US$200 million syndicated loan with Standard Chartered Bank and Scotiabank (Bahamas) Limited. The Grand Bahama Power Company also had existing loan facilities totalling $131.8 million dollars.

"The Resolution asks this House to authorise the Minister of Finance to borrow for the purpose of refinancing those facilities, which together amount to $331.82 million," said Mr. Davis.

Continuing he said, "The Minister may do so through Government loan agreements or lines of credit, through the issue of securities, or through other debt instruments. I want to be precise at the outset, because precision has been in short supply in some of the commentary of recent days. This resolution is not about adding new debt, authorising new spending, or buying a new asset.

"This resolution will allow us to take debts that already exist at commercial bank rates, and asks this House to allow us to place them on better terms within our national debt portfolio, where they can be managed with the scale and discipline that we manage our sovereign liability."

The Prime Minister explained that as part of the Government's broader debt financing exercise for this fiscal year, the Ministry of Finance is preparing to approach the external bond market for a facility sized to meet both the central Government's refinancing needs and the Grand Bahama obligations.

He said, "By consolidating them in that exercise, the Government expects to reduce annual debt service and to secure certainty about future interest payments. Any Bahamian family that has consolidated several expensive loans with a single loan will recognise the logic. The benefits to the two companies are considerable."

The Prime Minister argued that, "Once these facilities are retired, the Grand Bahama Energy Company will be left with only its working capital facility to service, which substantially reduces its debt burden and improves its financial flexibility.

"The Grand Bahama Power Company will shed significant debt service costs, and savings that would have otherwise gone to the banks can be directed instead to the maintenance, operational improvements and capital works on which the people of Freeport, Eight Mile Rock, West End and East Grand Bahama depend. A utility relieved of that weight should require less support and fewer subventions from its holding company, which is the outcome every taxpayer wants."



The Prime Minister reminded that the government's goal is to have every Bahamian household and business, on every island, to have power that is affordable, reliable and increasingly clean.

He said, "We want a resilient electricity system that we can rebuild quickly after a hurricane comes to our shores, that no longer rises and falls with every movement in world oil markets, and that becomes a reason for investors to choose The Bahamas rather than a reason to look elsewhere. That ambition carries a price, and this administration has chosen to embrace it."

"The reform programme we set out carries more than $1.1 billion in targeted investment, with $820 million directed to New Providence and $324 million to the Family Islands. The acquisition of the Grand Bahama Power Company was a part of that ambition, and so is the resolution now before the House," said Mr. Davis.

According to the Prime Minister the resolution is grounded in the Public Debt Management Act, 2021, which authorises the Minister of Finance to borrow for the purpose of refinancing existing public debt and which requires that certain changes in the form of the public debt come before Parliament.

"The Government," he said, "Is therefore seeking the authority of this House, as the law requires and as good governance demands."

In response to concerns raised by the Opposition who asked why the government first guaranteed the acquisition loan and now proposes to refinance it as direct debt.

Mr. Davis said, "It is a fair question, and the answer is straightforward.

In March, our priority was to complete a transaction with a willing seller on a timetable that protected the people of Grand Bahama, and a guaranteed bank facility offered the fastest and most certain route to closing. The sale closed on the 12th of May. The sensible next step is to replace short-term commercial financing with longer-term financing at the lower cost the sovereign can command."

He further explained that a rating agency whose report Opposition members have quoted expressed concern about contingent liabilities sitting outside the government's direct accounts, and by bringing these obligations onto the Government's own books, in full view of the Parliament and the public, the government is addressing that concern openly.

Turning to the working capital for GBPC the Prime Minister said the public has been told something that is inaccurate.

He said, "It has been reported that the $80 million approved by Parliament has vanished, that the Grand Bahama Power Company has received nothing, and that critical repairs and battery storage have been put on hold.

"I understand why those reports troubled the employees of the company and the businesses of the island, and I respect the people who raised their concerns. The facts are these. An $80 million working capital facility is available at the Grand Bahama Energy Company. The Grand Bahama Power Company received its first disbursement from that facility in the third quarter of this year, and it will receive further disbursements as they are required.

"A well-run facility is drawn down as the work demands, in the way a careful manager uses a line of credit, rather than emptied on the first day to sit idle and accrue interest.

PRD LAUNCHES NEW ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

BY GERRINO J. SAUNDERS
Journal News Editor

The Parliamentary Registration Department (PRD) now has a newly installed electoral management system (EMS), which is a major step to improve the electoral system.

Many Bahamians were not happy with the voting process in this year's May 12th General Election, especially with the advanced poll that saw extremely long lines and lengthy waiting periods which forced some voters to leave. Well, those challenges should be a thing of the past.

The government is actively modernizing the electoral system through the introduction of biometric voter cards and electronic polling books.

The system is being implemented by Canadian firm CBN which specializes in secure printing and identity systems.
This week Tuesday Parliamentary Commission Harrison Thompson said the program that went live on New Providence and Grand Bahama.

He said, "We have called you (media) together to inform you that the EMS system has gone live today – the system which deals with the biometric cards that we implemented during our last election where we had a soft introduction, but today we will start the process where we will start to do everything locally in The Bahamas."

According Mr. Thompson the registration and voting process will be smoother with voters coming to the PRD to get your biometrics without having to go through the passport office.

He is encouraging all individuals who are already on the voting register to begin to plan to have your biometric card issued to you. "It's a simple process and the time factor will be shortened as much as possible, so we invite you to start coming out right away," said Mr. Thompson.
The changes and upgrades aim to enhance election security and efficiency by replacing manual paper-based processes with digital infrastructure.

Lucretia Dean-Rolle is the EMS Project Manager for the PRD. While giving an update on the implementation process she noted that they have released two of the EMS systems where they are now accommodating renewals and new enrollments for individuals 18-years and older who have never registered to vote, and those persons who have a voters card and they wish to convert at this time they may start.

"We went live today with our production in house and the system is smooth. We had several persons who came in today and the experience was good. Now you will be able to have your biometrics taken at PRD which is your photograph, and your unique fingerprint, we are no longer migrating from the passport office so the verification process has ceased, you will either be renewed or enrolled for you biometric card," said Dean-Rolle.
According to Dean-Rolle the PRD has quite a number of biometric cards that need to be collected from those people who took part in the initial exercise leading up to the May 12th election. Many of those cards that were delayed prior to the election because they were printed out of country are now ready for collection.

According to Dean-Rolle, the turnaround time is presently 3-5 working days for New Providence and for Grand Bahama and the Family Islands 7-14 days, but the system is flexible so those time frames can be reduced.

All first-time applicants would have to produce a valid passport, or birth certificate in addition to other supporting information to ensure that you are a Bahamian.

Prime Minister Philip Davis went to the PRD on Tuesday to see how the new system is working. And while he did not share his thoughts with the media Mr. Thompson suggested the prime minister is pleased with what he saw.
"From all indications the Prime Minister seems to be impressed, but he also admonished us that we need to tighten up a bit more to see if we can reduce the time factor as much as possible. He wants to make it more efficient and more accessible to the population at large," said Thompson.



Harrison Thompson
Parliamentary Commission

He noted that the law now says that to register to vote you will need to have a biometric voter card. He was uncertain of the timeline for the policy decision for the old paper voter cards to be "retired and the biometric will take over fully."

Wes Owen the Project Manager for CBN noted that CBN has been involved with The Government of The Bahamas in a number of different departments including the passport office and boarder management among others.

He said, "We've actually had a lot of experience working with the government. In particular working with PRD challenges were around making sure that we were getting the correct data into the system. Making sure that the data was accurate and that it was complete. PRD went through a significant process to clean up those records to make sure that we were receiving as accurate data as possible."

"When we loaded the system, we went through a whole process of identifying where the discrepancies were and working with them where they reached out to different departments to collect that information that is being entered and ready for when we went live. I think that was probably the biggest challenge that we faced with this project."

The program was rolled out in New Providence and Grand Bahama, with the Family Islands to come onboard by the end of the month.

GOVERNMENT SEEKING LOWER RATES FOR GBPC LOAN

Story Cont. Pg.5

Since the Equity Rate Adjustment took effect following the close of the sale, no capital project at the Grand Bahama Power Company has been paused or cancelled for lack of funding," said Mr. Davis.

In conclusion the Prime Minister said the acquisition did more than bring a utility into public hands. He said, through the GBEC, it created the instrument that will bring coherent strategy to the whole of our public electricity sector.

He said, "The Government has since expanded the company's mandate beyond its role as parent of the Grand Bahama Power Company to include corporate oversight of all the Government's interests in the public utilities, Bahamas Power and Light among them. The Grand Bahama Energy Company will set enterprise-wide strategy, policies, standards, frameworks and controls, while Bahamas Power and Light and the Grand Bahama Power Company remain accountable for implementation and operational performance.

"It will provide fuel hedging and procurement, asset management, long-term capacity planning and procurement, consolidated financial reporting to the Government, debt management, capital allocation, risk management, governance and compliance, and capacity building. The wider programme is moving forward on every front," said Prime Minister Davis.

He challenged every Member of Parliament who voted on the resolution to weigh the alternative, because the choice before the nation is between investment and the status quo.

He said, "The status quo means remaining almost entirely dependent on imported fuel, with fuel alone accounting for around half of the total power bill. Until this administration acted, renewables supplied barely a fraction of one percent of our power, and the grid still loses more than a tenth of what it generates before it reaches a customer."

"The status quo also means the Grand Bahama of 2024, when ageing engines failed, load shedding became routine, and residents were asked to accept a rate increase in the midst of the outages. It means remembering that Hurricane Dorian inflicted more than $130 million in damage on our power sector and flooded the generating plant on Grand Bahama, and then rebuilding the same vulnerable system in the same vulnerable way."

"And it means telling every investor who considers Freeport or the Family Islands that the cost and reliability of power will remain a reason to go elsewhere. This Government will not accept that status quo. We will not leave the next generation an energy system that was already failing the last," proclaimed Prime Minister Davis.

He noted that there will be days when the grid falters while it is being rebuilt, and when that happens the government will say so and they will fix it.

"I would rather this Government be judged on the courage to build than excused for the comfort of standing still and this Resolution is a careful and responsible step within that larger programme," said Mr. Davis.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL 2026 OBSERVED

International Day of the Girl 2026 was observed last Friday, slightly ahead of the official date, October 11, to the theme, 'Silenced, Invisible, Deleted, Supporting Girls' Rights.' Patron, Mrs. Ann Marie Davis, of the Office of the Spouse of the Prime Minister, delivered remarks to girls from various schools in ceremonies at Breezes Bahamas.







CREATING 'BULLY-FREE ZONES'



Hon. Leon Lundy
Minister of Transport

The Anti-Bullying Organization (ABO), a Bahamian-based, non-profit organization, hosted an event entitled "ECHO (Embolden. Connect. Help. Overcome)," encouraging school children, parents, guardians, and the community to take a public stand against bullying.

Wife of the Prime Minister of The Bahamas, Mrs. Ann Marie Davis of the Office of the Spouse of the Prime Minister, gave a compelling message, urging students to be kind, stand up, and speak out against bullying. Mrs. Davis spoke about the seriousness of bullying and how it happens almost everywhere.

"Bullying is not harmless. It's harmful. Bullying not only threatens the physical health of a person who is bullied, but it also puts their mental health at risk.

"We have a role to play to stop bullying because bullying doesn't only happen in the classroom.

"It happens in other places, in the workplace, even at home, on the street, in the food store. So we have to be part of anti-bullying wherever we are," Mrs. Davis said.

Mrs. Davis also encouraged the adults to be good role models for the children.

"We can't urge young people to appreciate one another when we adults criticize one another in front of the children. We cannot tell children to think before they speak if we use our own words carelessly because young people are always watching us," she noted.

The students in attendance were from schools in Nassau, hosting ABO charter clubs: Eva Hilton Primary School, A.F. Adderley Junior High School, and Anatol Rodgers High School.

The Minister of Transport, the Hon. Leon Lundy also addressed the students, explaining the forms of bullying, the power of kindness, and the duty of standing up for others who are being bullied.

Assistant Director of Education, Mr. Michael Culmer who stood in proxy for the Director of Education, Mrs. Dominique McCartney-Russell, also addressed the students expounding on the event's name - ECHO (Embolden. Connect. Help. Overcome) and quoting scriptures from the Bible, encouraging them to love and honour each other and carry each other's burdens. Also in attendance was Bahamas Union of Teachers President, Belinda Wilson.

The Anti-Bullying Organization (ABO) was founded by its president, Ms. Jada Strachan in 2015. After suffering bullying herself, from primary school till junior high, Ms. Strachan was determined to bring awareness to bullying and eliminate it in all schools. ABO teaches all how to be sympathetic, empathetic, kind and respectful to all despite differences and other factors. Counselling and support is offered to both the victim of bullying and the bully. The bully behavior is addressed, investigated, and resolution follows, helping the bully understand the underlying issue.

For more than a decade, ABO has chartered Anti-Bullying Organization clubs in both Freeport and Nassau, hosting more than 600 students. ABO also has annual training and camps for students. ABO plans on hosting the ECHO (Embolden. Connect. Help. Overcome) event annually for the Anti-Bullying Awareness Month in October.

PRIME MINISTER CONGRATULATES NATIONAL HONOURS RECIPIENTS; ENCOURAGES YOUNG PEOPLE IN NATION BUILDING

More than 400 people were honoured for their contribution to the continued development of The Bahamas, in three separate ceremonies over two days, the first two held on National Heroes Day.

On Monday, October 12, 2026, in the Baha Mar Convention Centre, which was bedecked in national colours, Her Excellency, the Governor General, the Most Hon. Dame Cynthia Pratt, as Chancellor of the Societies of Honour and in accordance with the National Honours Act, presented the honourees with their respective designations in morning and afternoon ceremonies.

On Tuesday morning, October 13, the third Investiture Ceremony was held, closing out the list of honours for some 425 men and women from public service and private enterprise, the arts, the church, civic, and community life.

The Hon. Philip Davis, Prime Minister, in his keynote addresses delivered at all ceremonies, while congratulating the recipients -- encouraged young people to take on a project and complete it, even when it gets difficult.

"No one we honour today began with everything figured out. Each of them began somewhere. With a decision. With an opportunity taken. With the courage to try something worth doing, and the determination to keep going when the road got hard," he said.

"You do not need the perfect idea or the perfect moment. Begin where you are, with what you have. Look at your community, your school, your church, and your workplace. Ask what needs doing. Then ask what you can do about it."

The prime minister noted that nation-building is not the work of government alone. It is not reserved for those with titles or positions.

"It is the work of every Bahamian who sees a chance to contribute and accepts the responsibility that comes with it. My father understood that. So do the men and women we honour today," he said.

The prime minister shared that his father was his "hero"; although his name is not in any history book.

"He was an ordinary man. He was a firefighter. He never held high office, and he never asked for recognition. He simply did all that he could to provide for his family, and to raise his children to be the best they could be, for their family and for their country."

As a young boy growing up on Cat Island, the prime minister also said that his grandparents taught him life-long lessons. "Whatever you do in life, leave something good behind. My father lived that lesson every day. I believe every person in this room has a hero like that."

He said his father brought him to New Providence and he experienced several firsts, like eating an ice-cream cone for the first time.

"I was a Cat Island boy. My father would send things to me on the mailboat. I did not know what ice cream was until my father gave it to me," the prime minister said. "From Cat Island to Nassau, and to this podium. What a journey it has been."

He observed that "ordinary Bahamians" who may never have held a prestigious office, but who moved this country forward, were being honoured. He thanked all honourees for their patriotism, sacrifice, hard work and dedication to nation-building.

The Governor General conferred upon them the Order of The Bahamas, the Order of Excellence, the Order of Distinction, the Order of Merit, the Distinguished Service Medal, Medal for Acts of Bravery, and the Governor General's Award.

Noted among the honourees was United States Congresswoman Frederica Wilson, who received the Order of Excellence – an honour given to Heads of foreign governments or such individuals who are not citizens of The Bahamas but who have given exemplary service to The Bahamas. She was among six who received such an honour.

The Hon. Fred Mitchell, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of The Advisory Committee on National Honours, also congratulated the recipients, and thanked the committee for their work in organizing and management of National Honours.

The ceremonies were embellished with pomp, pageantry, and fanfare, for the entrance of the Governor General; ceremonial and dance music performances by the Royal Bahamas Police and Defence Force bands; soloists; receptions; and photo opportunities.

The Governor General is pictured presenting the honours.

















SOCIAL SERVICES TO HOST POVERTY REDUCTION EXPO

Officials at the Ministry of Social Services, and its various Departments, will join forces with other key government ministries and corporations, as it hosts its first Poverty Reduction Outreach and Expo.

Scheduled for Saturday, October 17, at Windsor Park, East and Wulff Roads, the event is part of the Davis Administration's ongoing efforts towards ending "systemic poverty" in-country through the poverty reduction efforts of various individual ministries, and as a collective.

The Expo is scheduled for 11am-5pm and will include feature presentations from a series of Cabinet Ministers: Minister of Social Services, Sen. the Hon. Barbara Cartwright, who has responsibility for Poverty Reduction in her ministerial portfolio; Minister of Health and Wellness, the Hon. Dr. Michael Darville; Minister of Housing and Land Reform, the Hon. Keith Bell; Minister of Energy, Utilities and Aviation, the Hon. JoBeth Coleby-Davis; Minister of Innovation and National Development, the Hon. Sebastian Bastian, and Minister of Urban Renewal and Community Relations, the Hon. Lisa Rahming.

Senator Cartwright said poverty is a very complex issue that crosses many lines, hence the Administration's focus on addressing its numerous impacts of poverty from a holistic point of view.

Representation from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in the person of Parliamentary Secretary, Senator, the Hon. Keenan Johnson, in addition to team members from Labour will also be onsite.

"So if you are unemployed, under-employed, looking for a better job, receiving social services benefits or simply you just want to support social services, this expo is for you," Minister Cartwright said.

"We want the Bahamian people to know that we are recognizing the day and that is good, but it is time for us to take serious action."

Senator Cartwright said ending systemic poverty requires personal responsibility and individual involvement.

"So if you want to break the cycle, you must take advantage of the various opportunities that are being offered. It is time for us to remove the bars that have our people trapped in poverty. Together we can reduce poverty one step at a time."





URBAN RENEWAL AUTHORITY LAUNCHES FIRST IN A SERIES OF MASS FEEDING INITIATIVES ON GRAND BAHAMA

On Tuesday, October 6, 2026, the Urban Renewal Authority on Grand Bahama in collaboration with Celebration Key and Carnival Cruise Line hosted a successful Feeding Initiative at Central Zion Baptist Church in Eight Mile Rock. The event provided a variety of prepared meals to residents in the community, marking the first in a series of planned mass feeding events throughout the island.









NEW BTC CEO BEGINS LISTENING TOUR



BTC and Liberty Caribbean leaders alongside members of BCPMU and BCPOU.

Newly appointed Bahamas Telecommunications Company (BTC) Chief Executive Officer Gravette Brown paid a courtesy call on the Presidents and Executives of the Bahamas Communications and Public Officers Union (BCPOU) and the Bahamas Communications and Public Managers Union (BCPMU) last week as one of her first priorities in office.

Brown has already begun a company-wide listening tour and will meet with colleagues across The Bahamas, including in the Family Islands. The discussions will focus on employee concerns, suggested solutions and what teams need to deliver more reliable service and better customer support.

"It starts with me taking the time to listen to our colleagues and to the concerns our customers have raised," Brown said. "I recognize that there is more work to do to deliver the reliable service and support our customers expect and deserve. Building on the work already underway takes a collective effort, it starts with us, supporting our people and keeping the needs of our customers at the centre of that work."

Through the listening tour, Brown aims to hear directly from colleagues with a focus on better supporting employees and improving the experience customers receive throughout The Bahamas.



L-R Sharazad Pickstock BCPMU President, Gravette Brown BTC CEO, Sherry Benjamin BCPOU President & Valentine Grimes BTC Deputy Chairman.

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YOUTH MONTH CELEBRATION CONTINUES WITH MOYS YOUTH MARCH AND RALLY IN GRAND BAHAMA

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