

EDITORIAL
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12% VAT HIKE UNPALATABLE

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YOUR WEATHER

86°F
Partly sunny with a shower or t-storm

SUNRISE: 6:21 a.m.
SUNSET: 8:05 p.m.
HIGH TIDE: 1:05 a.m. - 1:32 p.m.
LOW TIDE: 7:29 a.m. - 7:34 p.m.
WINDS: WSW at 10 mph

See Page 10 for full round-up

The Freeport News
BUSINESS PROFESSIONALS & SERVICE GUIDE

Whatever you're looking for, these local businesses ask you to consider them first.

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25 YEARS FOR BELIZAIRE

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Paul Belizaire returned to the Supreme Court on Thursday (May 31) to learn his fate, after the jury found him guilty of armed robbery on May 10. Belizaire's sentencing was in relation to the 2015 murder and armed robbery of Barry and Sheena Johnson. Belizaire was sentenced to 25 years for the couple's armed robbery and the two-years-and-eight-months he spent in the

Bahamas Department of Correctional Services (BDCS) is being considered. Attorney Geoffrey Farquharson represented the convicted man. Belizaire's former co-defendant Kevin Dames, also appeared in court with his attorney Carlsson Shurland. Justice Estelle Gray-Evans, who had presided over the lengthy murder trial also presided over the sentencing. Erica Kemp and Neil Braithwaite appeared for the Prosecution. During her submission Kemp

presented the mitigating and aggravating factors relative to Belizaire's sentencing. She stated that the mitigating factor is that Belizaire is a relatively young man at 31-years-old. Kemp furthered that the aggravating factors were that he invaded the Johnson's home heavily armed with an assault rifle, accosting Mr. Johnson along with his former co-accused. He also fled the scene and was later positively identified by his former co-accused, and he was involved in the commission of armed robbery in which two



SENTENCE HANDED DOWN – Paul Belizaire was sentenced to 25 years for the armed robbery of the late Barry and Sheena Johnson.
(PHOTO: JENNEVA RUSSELL)

persons were killed. "He invaded the safety of these people's home and their lives," she said. She gave several examples of similar cases where many of the convicts received 20 - 25 years of prison time. Kemp requested that the Crown impose a sentence to deter others from committing a similar crime. She submitted that Belizaire be sentenced to 30 - 35 years in prison, because two innocent persons were killed for the sake of his greed. Farquharson then presented

his submissions. He said that Belizaire's sentence should reflect the facts of the charge he is faced with. The attorney reminded that his client is charged with stealing a truck and cocaine, and not money or cocaine. Farquharson accused the Prosecution of trying to deceive the court, because the Crown did not charge him with stealing drugs or money. He said that the Crown must practice proportionality, "they cannot give Belizaire a drastically different sentence than his former co-accused Allan Alcime

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'Driving in the right direction'

Agreement between GB Taxi Union and Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line expected to boost business

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An agreement between the Grand Bahama Taxi Union and Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line is expected to significantly boost business for local taxi drivers in the coming weeks. The agreement was announced during a press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister Monday (June 4) morning. Minister of State for Grand Bahama in the Office of the Prime Minister, Senator Kwasi Thompson noted that it was a significant day for taxi drivers on the island. "Today is a significant day for taxi drivers in Grand Bahama, particularly those who operate from the Freeport Harbour. Tax- is have continued to struggle for business in Grand Bahama for many years. It also cannot be denied that there continues to be inequality in the business that taxi drivers receive at the Harbour," he said.



NEW AGREEMENT – An agreement between the Grand Bahama Taxi Union and Bahamas Paradise Celebration Cruise Line was announced, during a press conference at the Office of the Prime Minister on Monday, May 4. Pictured left to right at the announcement were Jose Rosado Bahamas Paradise Celebration Cruise hotel director; Captain Sverre Soedsnes; Oneil Khosa, president Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line; Minister of State for Grand Bahama in the Office of the Prime Minister, Sen. Kwasi Thompson; David Jones, President of the GB Taxi Union and Harcourt Brown, Permanent Secretary.
(PHOTO: JENNEVA RUSSELL)

He noted that while this does not resolve all the issues of taxi drivers, it does represent a significant step forward for taxi drivers. "I am informed by the Taxi Union President Jones that as a result of this agreement, taxis are receiving an additional estimated \$10,000 a week or \$40,000 a month worth of new business," Thompson said. He added that what makes this business even more important is that taxis are able to build relationships with passengers who are staying on the island overnight and, therefore, can arrange future trips which will result in better experience for the guest and more economic activity for the driver.

Thompson also noted that in conjunction with Ministry of Tourism, the government negotiated an airlift agreement with Sunwing and now have the return of Vacation Express. It has been announced that a total of eight non-stop flights departing from several U.S. cities, will begin flight schedules in May 2018. Flights from Detroit, Chicago, Nashville, Pittsburgh, Newark, Baltimore, Cincinnati and Dallas will be operated by Swift Air LLC. According to Thompson, the Ministry of Tourism projects yielding a potential 16,800 passengers annually. These flights have already started and are bringing much-needed additional taxi business at the interna-

tional airport. "While we are pleased for these developments, the government is also continuing the negotiations with Grand Lucayan, which are important to all tourism stakeholders and would like to keep the public fully informed. "We agree with the developer Paul Wynn that although these negotiations are very complex, we believe we are at the end of this process," he said. He noted that the government looks forward to the renovations and full opening of the Grand Lucayan. "We are also very encouraged by the negotiations with Grand Palm Acquisitions Ltd. and the former Ginn project, which

expect to finalize a Heads of Agreement very soon which will allow this development to fully proceed," he added. Oneil Khosa, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Bahamas Paradise Cruise Line stated that it is very important for their guests to feel comfortable, safe and wanted. He assured that the company is committed to the island. "When it was brought to our attention that taxis needed help it was very natural for us to step up, because we are so in sync and so much in tune with what happens in Freeport that we are not removed from the process of whatever happens here," he said.

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REESTABLISHING REU – The Ministry of Finance intends to pay particular emphasis on revenue enhancement, with respect to the government's purse moving forward, said Deputy Prime Minister K. Peter Turnquest, Minister of Finance.
(PHOTO: TNG/TORRELL GLINTON)

Turnquest: Revenue enhancement high on 2018/2019 Budget agenda

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The Ministry of Finance intends to pay particular emphasis to revenue enhancement, with respect to the government's purse moving forward, Deputy Prime Minister K. Peter Turnquest, Minister of Finance said, Wednesday (May 30) during the near two-hour 2108/2019 Budget Communication in the House of Assembly. In doing so, he noted that the Revenue Enhancement Unit will be reestablished. "The Ministry of Finance has also been mandated to renew its emphasis on enhanced revenue collection. To that end the Revenue Enhancement Unit, another example of an initiative simply floundering under the previous administration, is being recast to ensure that revenue is properly and fully collected across the major tax segments. "To facilitate these efforts, an amendment is being proposed to the Financial Administration and Audit Act to provide the authority to the Ministry of Finance to form an inter-departmental unit that will be assigned the task of revenue enhancement across the major areas of taxation. "In addition, the ministry's revenue policy structure will be reorganized in such a way that officers will be assigned responsibility for the monitoring and analysis of a specific major area of revenue, on the basis of which recommendations are to be formulated for remedial measures

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