

EDITORIAL

Oban statement absent of EIA explanation

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YOUR WEATHER



78°F
Mostly cloudy with a couple of showers beginning at midday

SUNRISE: 6:33 a.m.
SUNSET: 6:19 p.m.
HIGH TIDE: 11:43 a.m. - 12:18 a.m.
LOW TIDE: 5:42 a.m. - 5:53 p.m.
WINDS: SW at 16 mph

See Page 10 for full round-up

Seventeen Centre, Downtown Telephone 352-2224



Store Hours: Monday - Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

New Arrivals

Check-Out
70% RACKS

BURNT OUT

Making digital marketplaces fairer, focus of Consumer Education Week

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The Consumer Affairs Unit of the Ministry of Labour will observe Annual Consumer Education Week beginning Monday, March 12 under the theme, "Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer," revealed Reno V. Smith, CAU Chief Price Inspector.

Exciting and informative activities will take place all weeklong, with the foyer of the C. A. Smith Complex being transformed into a showroom featuring a CAU Exhibition and live, daily radio chit-chats on ZNS 3 kick-starting at 9:00 a.m. with members of the Consumer Affairs team discussing the history and evolution of the unit.

"Definitely, the CAU Team is elated to celebrate the Annual Consumer Education Week and engaged a slate of activities aimed at educating the community of the important role this unit plays in our society.

"Daily, CAU Team members will engage radio listeners in Chit-chat Sessions on ZNS 3, which would include trivia and giveaways.

"Expanding upon last year's theme, "Consumer Rights in the Digital Age," which is "Making Digital Marketplaces Fairer," the CAU is cognizant of the fact that we are living in an electronic/digital age and nowadays more
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GBYADP purpose outlined

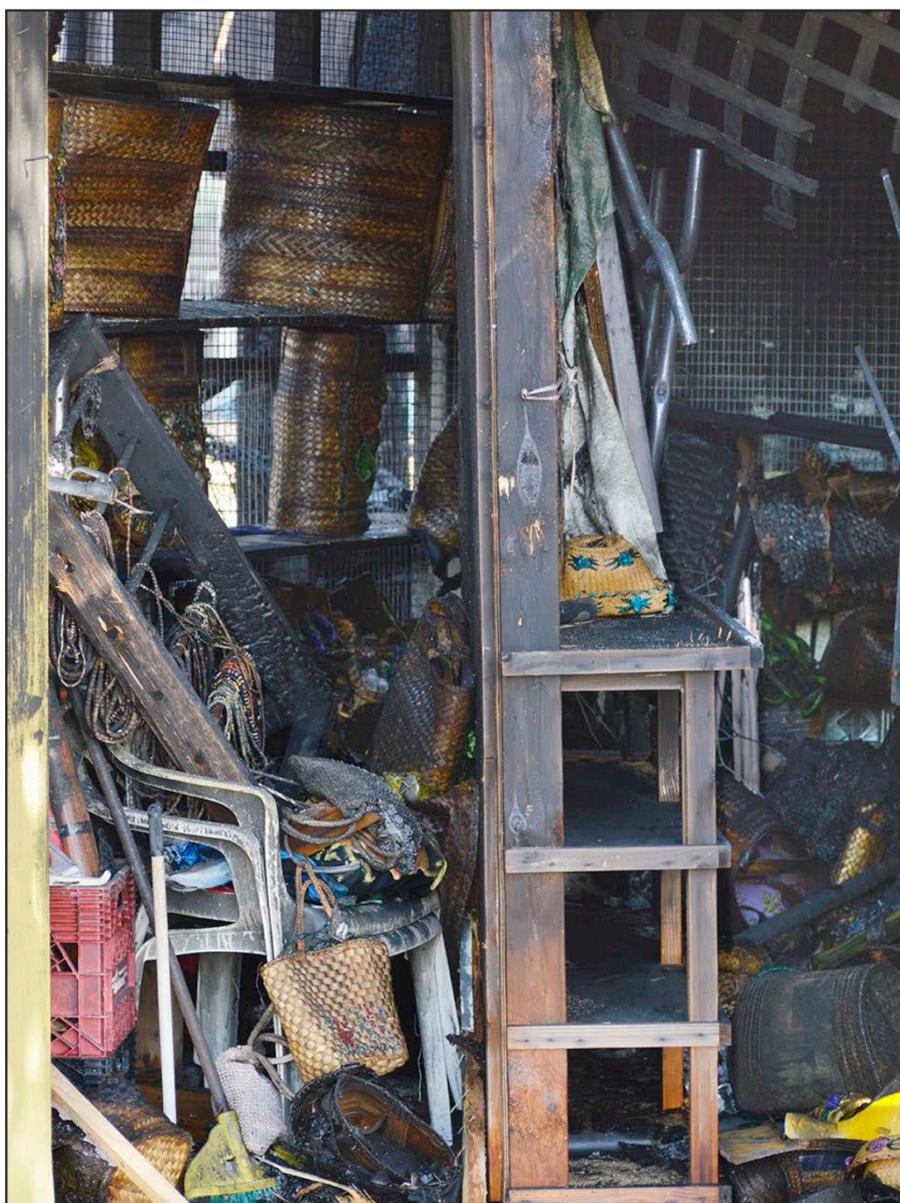
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Bahamas Inter-American Institute for Cooperation for Agriculture (IICA) Country Representative and Technical Specialist, Shacara Lightbourne, and Keelepers, State Association of Beekeepers, Kim Robertson, recently visited the Rotary Club of Freeport (RCF) along with members of the Grand Bahama Youth Apiculture Development Programme (GBYADP) at Ruby Swiss Restaurant.

Elsie Knowles, RCF president welcomed the group and was pleased to note that Robertson, who traveled to Grand Bahama from Florida, USA and serves as a GBYADP Beekeeping Lecturer is also a friend of the Rotary Club of St. Augustine.

Providing insight regarding both IICA and the GBYADP, Lightbourne stated, "Certainly, we are elated to present information to the Rotary Club of Freeport regarding the Grand Bahama Youth Apiculture Development Programme (GBYADP), which is an initiative funded by the Office of the Prime Minister, Bahamas Development Bank, The Bahamas Department of Cooperatives and IICA.

"A 14-week course, the Grand Bahama Youth Apiculture Development Programme, which currently has 25 persons, ages 17 through 35 years old enrolled, pr
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LIVELIHOOD GONE – All that remained were ashes, fire and smoke damaged stock at straw and craft businesses in the International Bazaar, following an early morning blaze on Tuesday, March 5. (PHOTOS: SHAYNE STUBBS)



IN TEARS – Businesswoman Carol Curry is in tears after viewing the destruction at her straw and craft stall Tuesday (March 6) morning, following a fire that gutted the business at the International Bazaar.



TAMPERED WITH – Elisabeth Fowler, vendor, claims that her stall was tampered with prior to the blaze that destroyed her business. (See more photos on Page 5)

said, "Ms. Fowler, you would not believe what happened, our shops burned down."

Referring to the amount of inventory she had recently placed in her store she added, "With all of that money in that shop. Money was in that shop, I had just bought so much clothes and put them in the shop."

Fowler has been a vendor in that particular stall since 2014.

"This is our livelihood right here, we put so much clothes in here just yesterday (Monday, March 5). I bought so many nice blouses and I have one more bag at home. They used to break open the shop so much, but I stuck it out."

Fowler believed that burglars ransacked the shop spaces, having their way with the merchandise inside and upon leaving, set the structure ablaze.

"I can see where they tampered with the lock, to pull it out, took out what they wanted and then they burned it down," she alleged.

As her shops (two adjacent units) were situated at the front of the building facing The Perfume Factory and the Entwined Liquor store, she claims that there appears to be evidence that shop owners' stalls located at the rear of the building were also tampered.

Visibly shaken, Curry, proprietor of shop number two was in tears at the scene she met.

"It is so sad we had 35 people out here one time ago and now only about six or seven of us are still out here holding on. I do not have the strength ... I honestly would like to know what happened."

Curry's business was a family oriented one, so many of her children and grandchildren were present Tuesday morning viewing the destruction.

Curry's grandson, Alexander Curry, said, "The cooks across the street, at the hotel came to work after three this morning and said that they saw the flames. They called the fire department and everyone else. They told us that the fire started after 3:00 a.m. and by 4 - 4:30 a.m. everyone was here," said Curry.

Tanya Curry, one of Curry's daughters shared that she had recently started working with her mother at the shop; however, the business has been in the family for many years.

"I was born and raised out here. I got the phone call at about 4:45 a.m. from the lady that does the breakfast across the road. She apologized for calling me so early, but told me that my mother's shop was on fire.

"At first I did not know how to react, I just called all of my siblings so that they could come down because I live in Russell Town, Eight Mile Rock so it would have taken me a while to get here.

"It is such an emotional time, because we just restocked. I just started working for my mother a couple months now, this is all that we had. My mother does not have a house, she pays rent so this is going to be really sad, not only for her, but people that
(Continued on Page 3)

- Straw and craft vendors' businesses gutted by fire
- Intl. Bazaar vendors emotional after losing everything
- Business owners calling on the government to lend assistance
- Deputy PM says govt. committed to securing alternative sites for vendors

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Tragedy struck several straw vendors during the early morning hours of Tuesday (March 6), when fire gutted their businesses, leaving behind ashes and smoke damaged products.

Vendors, at the scene, were in utter shock and disbelief as they were awoken by the news that their livelihood was no more.

Upon arrival at the International Bazaar shortly before 9:00 a.m. yesterday, the team from this daily observed many shop owners, along with their families, sitting together trying to come to grips with what the fire had done to their only sources of income.

As the fire appeared to have spread quickly throughout the building, nothing inside the doors of their businesses was spared.

Rochelle Floyd, daughter of Norma Duncombe (former shop owner) was heartbroken, to say the least, to see the shop that her mother had left to her and her sister.

"I am looking at my shop, totally burned right down. This was my mother's shop that she left for my sister and me. It is totally burned, completely unrecognizable. I just got a phone call this morning from someone telling me that the shop had burned down. It devastates me to see this, I decided to come down and snap a picture to send to my sister, to let her know what is going on.

"I had so many things in this shop, now it is burnt to the ground. I do know what I am going to do now, because everything is gone," said Floyd.

She added that her shop space, which is located at the rear of the building was closed for the past few months as she used the space as a storage area for her merchandise.

"I decided to close my shop down, but there are other ladies that remained open on the opposite side. I feel so badly, to see our shops gone ... tears are in my eyes."

Questioned how long it's been since she closed her shop to the public, Floyd stated, "I haven't been opened for about three to four months, but I was checking in and out to make sure that no one was breaking in. A while back we had some break-ins and everything was partly gone, so I decided to close my door; but now look at it. I cannot believe this. There is no money for us to even build a building, so what are we going to do now? It is really sad."

Shop owner Elisabeth Fowler occupied two shop spaces at the front of the building, nearest to the road.

"I do not know what happened. They called me as I was about to come out here this morning, I am always the first or second to come out early every morning, to set up."

Fowler said she received the devastating phone call after 7:00 a.m.

"Carol Curry's (fellow shop owner) daughter called me and