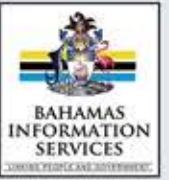


BAHAMAS INFORMATION SERVICES

THIS WEEK IN THE BAHAMAS



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June 30, 2023

BIS and BCB Celebrate 'National Flag Day'

Staff of Bahamas Information Services (BIS) and the Broadcasting Corporation of The Bahamas (BCB) observed 'National Flag Day' on Friday morning, June 30, with Hoisting of the National Flag, by members of the Royal Bahamas Police Force, on the corporation's compound. 'National Flag Day' Flag Raising Ceremonies were held today across The Bahamas and at Foreign Missions.

As the month of June closes, activities ramp up towards the nation's Jubilee: The Bahamas celebrates its 50th Anniversary of Independence on July 10, 2023. The National Independence Secretariat has organized a plethora of events for residents to embrace and celebrate diverse aspects of Bahamian life, history and culture.

In his remarks, Minister of State with oversight of BCB and BIS, the Hon. Myles LaRoda marked the considerable importance of this moment for the beautiful Bahamas archipelago. And he pointed out reasons to be proud, including that of the extraordinary achievement of many Bahamian nationals on the world stage.

Looking to the future, he encouraged those abroad, mainly young people, to return home to The Bahamas, and become involved in the sacred mission of assisting in building their country.

Other speakers were Director General of BIS, Eicott Coleby; General Manager of BCB, Clint Watson; and Deputy Chairman of BCB, Athama Bowe. BIS Executive Director Diana Swann was in attendance.

In remarks, congratulations were expressed for the work and legacy of the industrious people of The Bahamas, on the occasion of the nation's 50th Independence Anniversary. The National Independence Secretariat was thanked for "their hard work in making these events not only possible but special for so many local heroes" whose vision and mission contributed to the country's ever-evolving and deepening democracy.

Bahamians were admonished to actively participate in the guarding of national sovereignty, deepening of democracy, and strengthening of national identity, with the theme of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations – 'The Bahamas - One Nation: Our Legacy, Our Future' speaking powerfully to those ideals.

Honourees of this season were thanked for their love of country as demonstrated through life-long commitment to sustained development, island by island, in areas such as health, sailing, community and youth development, religion, hospitality, education and sports.

BIS Director General, Eicott Coleby relayed that the institutions built by our forebears continue to not only drive development, but assist greatly in defining nationhood and teaching all and sundry what it means to be Bahamian.

He said: communities, islands, countries and civilizations are developed and sustained through public and private institutions. Two such institutions are Bahamas Information Services (BIS) and the Broadcasting Corporation of the Bahamas (BCB) which "have worked tirelessly to keep our people informed about the activities of the government and the nation, thus keeping our culture and civilization intact and the Bahamian Diaspora duly informed about the homeland.

"After fifty years of sovereign Independence, the Bahamian people have good reasons to look back on their achievements with national pride and to be inspired to work more diligently in doing their part to make The Bahamas the best little country on earth.

"We must not shirk in our responsibility to address and conquer the existential threats to our way of life. In the face of global warming and irregular weather patterns, pandemics, food security, irregular migration, we must build sustainability and resilience in the face of these threats.

"Further and more importantly, our national identity, culture and value system must remain intact.

"On this Fiftieth Anniversary of Independence and on behalf of the management and staff of the Bahamas Information Services Department, I thank and congratulate our brothers and sisters across the length and breadth of this country as we celebrate sovereign nationhood and what it means to be Bahamian.

"May Almighty God continue to bless the Commonwealth of The Bahamas."



Budget Wrap-Up: Prime Minister envisions 50 years from now, "lives changed forever by opportunities made real in this budget"



During his Budget Wrap-Up for Budget Fiscal Year 2023/24, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance the Hon. Philip Davis said that as the 2023/2024 National Budget debate closed, his Government did so with confidence in the Bahamian people and optimism about "the bright future we can build together".

"The policies and investments in this budget reflect our conviction that, in order to build enduring and inclusive progress – in order to build a better today and a better tomorrow for our people – we must grow stronger," Prime Minister Davis said in the House of Assembly, on June 26, 2023.

"National, economic and personal security are central to this budget because, while we are optimists, Madam Speaker, we are also realists," he added. Prime Minister Davis noted that, in today's world, every nation must navigate increasingly complex and interconnected challenges; and that was especially so for a nation like The Bahamas – a nation on the frontlines of a changing climate.

"Economic and financial crises, invasions and armed conflicts, highly transmissible diseases, supply chain breakdowns, global inflationary pressures – these problems may begin in other countries, but none are contained by national borders," he said. "Problems which originate elsewhere find their way to Bahamian shores – often sooner rather than later."

Prime Minister Davis added: "A planet that is warming because of the carbon emissions of industrialized nations means more extreme weather events everywhere, including more frequent and more intense hurricanes in our region. Gun merchants who care only for profit sell the weapons that flow into our region. Social media platforms produce benefits, but also produce misinformation and lies, which spread quickly and increase cynicism, rage and division.

"These are the facts."

Prime Davis noted that the policy choices that gave rise to or perpetuate many of those problems were often made in national capitals and corporate headquarters thousands of miles from The Bahamas. "We cannot control the decisions made in other nations, but getting stronger as a country and as a people – that is something we can and we must do," he said. "We can take responsibility for our security and our future. No one is going to do it for us.

"No one should do it for us."

Prime Minister Davis pointed out that The Bahamas was "finally on a more secure path to progress." "We are asserting ourselves on the world stage: fighting for fair climate finance, leading the way to establish blue carbon credits, working for a more stable region, and promoting our nation as a first-class destination and investment partner," he said. "We are investing in Bahamian agriculture – because food security is critical to economic security."

"We are investing in learning recovery, and in our students and our teachers; we are investing in our artists and our athletes; and we are investing in Bahamian entrepreneurs – because investing in our people, and giving Bahamians the skills and resources to thrive in a 21st century economy is at the heart of economic security," Prime Minister Davis added. He noted that his Government was investing in the Royal Bahamas Defence Force, with new vessels, new recruits, new training opportunities, and strengthened partnerships "because national security requires border security".

Prime Minister Davis added that his Government was also investing in the new National Youth Guard, providing young Bahamians not just training for future careers, but the opportunity to fortify our nation's emergency response efforts. As hurricanes grow more intense, he said, strengthening the national capacity to protect its people and respond in a crisis was a key element of national security.

"We are investing in anti-crime and anti-violence initiatives, saturation patrols, and anti-gang resources in schools; we are investing in Urban Renewal, the Second Chance programme, and in street lighting, neighborhood clean-ups, and community centres – because all Bahamians deserve safety at home, at school, and in our communities," Prime Minister Davis said. "We are investing in new affordable housing, because, as any Bahamian will tell you, there's nothing like the security of owning your own home."

He added: "We are investing in infrastructure in the Family Islands, in renewable energy, in Family Island clinics and in our green, blue, and orange economies. We are also attracting unprecedented levels of investment in our Family Islands, with several Family Islands securing multi-million-dollar investments, which will create new entrepreneurial opportunities, provide jobs, generate revenue for local government, and provide opportunities for local businesses.

"And we're investing in a major expansion of hospital facilities in New Providence and Grand Bahama, the renovation and improvement of multiple clinics throughout our islands, an expanded Catastrophic Health Care Fund, and a first-ever organ donor programme to save lives and improve the health of the Bahamian people." Those priorities, Prime Minister Davis stated, reflected The Bahamas' "profound belief in the dignity of every one of our citizens". "This budget is designed to lift people up, to widen and deepen Bahamian participation in our economy, to make us safer, and to help us care for one another," he said.

"We believe it is vital to build our country's strength and resilience because we live in an era where one external shock is quickly followed by another," Prime Minister Davis added. "To lead is to deal with the facts as they are, not as we would wish them to be – and so it is that we are choosing to confront this reality: that in order to survive and prosper we must grow stronger.

"What's more, we are working toward a brighter future without forgetting that many Bahamians need and deserve support today." Prime Minister Davis pointed out that his Government worked hard to create a budget that balanced addressing our most pressing needs today – with investing in the long-term, nation-building solutions that will be the foundation for The Bahamas' next chapter as a nation.

"Fifty years from now, many of us will no longer be here, but what will stand the test of time – God willing – is our vision, the impact of our policies – and most of all, the lives changed forever by opportunities made real in this budget," he stated. He added: "Just think of it: Securing opportunities and ownership will empower more Bahamians to break the cycle of generational poverty – and live the Bahamian dream that has eluded too many Bahamian families for far too long. In fifty years, there will be Bahamian families who can trace their family's first real step toward generational wealth back to a business grant, or keys to a first home, that were funded by this budget." Prime Minister Davis state that the seeds of a "new, more inclusive Bahamian economy" were in that budget.

"There are young men and women who will be given a new lease on life – a chance to overcome childhoods in which they may have been neglected rather than loved," he said. "Young Bahamians will be given the grace and opportunity to overcome early mistakes, and choose a different, better path." "We believe the circumstances of your birth should not limit your potential," he added. "We believe that mistakes made early on should not foreclose the possibility of turning things around, and leading a productive, fulfilling life."

Prime Minister Davis noted that his Government was building a secure foundation. However, he added, a foundation was only the beginning -- to truly realize his Government's vision, that foundation must be built up to completion.

"That is the point of strategic national development," he said. "There must be continuity, not just across budget years, but across successive administrations." "That's why so many Bahamians hated 'stop, review, and cancel' – they understood it was partisan politics, not national development, that was being prioritized." Prime Minister Davis pointed out that that was why in his Government's Blueprint for Change, it promised The Bahamian people that it would complete and implement the National Development Plan.

"We have inherited a beautiful country and we have an obligation to protect it for future generations," he said. "The best way to do that is through a properly organized national development plan. Prime Minister Davis added: "In our prior administration we spent years consulting with Bahamians from every walk of life to create the National Development Plan, a foundational and comprehensive long-term plan for the country's development and prosperity. We specifically promised that we would, relaunch, complete and legislate the National Development Plan. We intend to deliver on that promise."

Prime Minister Davis noted that his Government had re-appointed the National Development Plan committee, appointing a chairman to complete the plan and then prepare an implementation plan. He added that his Government was currently reviewing recommendations for the steering committee to oversee the work.

"We have included civil society, the business community, labour and religious leadership on the committee," he said. "Additionally, the government will appoint a secretariat to support the implementation of the work."

"We already have an initial draft legislation that will create the framework for implementation," Prime Minister Davis said. "We eagerly look forward to having a completed and updated National Development Plan, and implementation plan along with supporting legislation tabled for debate in Parliament."



PHOTO(S) OF THE WEEK

The Sound of Jubilee' Bahamas 50th Anniversary of Independence National Gospel Concert, Sunday, June 25, 2023 at Bahamas Faith Ministries to the theme, 'One God. One People.'

Government House Receives Blessing and Re-Dedication as Restoration Nears Completion



Governor General, His Excellency the Most Hon. Sir Cornelius A. Smith hosted a Blessing and Re-Dedication Ceremony of Government House, Wednesday morning, June 28, 2023 as the project to restore and renovate the historical landmark is almost complete.

Anglican Bishop of The Bahamas and the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Rt. Reverend Laish Boyd officiated the Blessing and Re-Dedication. According to Sir Cornelius, the landmark had seen no major form of restoration since the Great Hurricane of 1929. In his reflections on the landmark's return to its former splendour, the Governor General said the renovation of Government House was not only critical for persons working and residing on the premises, but for Bahamians across the country to feel a sense of pride.

"We want to see that Government House, which stands at the front door of our country, represents what I call the 'best of The Bahamas' and should not only impress our visitors, but also give Bahamians every reason to be proud of their state house," he said.

In attendance were: Lady Smith, wife of the Governor General; Prime Minister and Minister of Finance the Hon. Philip Davis and Mrs. Davis; the Hon. Mr. Chief Justice Sir Ian Winder; Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments and Aviation the Hon. Chester Cooper; Minister of Works and Utilities the Hon. Alfred Sears; other cabinet ministers and officials.



Bahamas Development Bank Launches Partnership that Will Help Creatives Receive Financing



Nicholas Higgs, Managing Director, Bahamas Development Bank (BDB), said one of the hardest sectors to finance or one of the most stubborn areas to finance in the country is the Orange (creative) Economy.

"The creative space is misunderstood by a lot of investors," Mr. Higgs said. "Traditional finance persons do not really get the orange and creative space."

However, the BDB is finding mechanisms to allow creatives to receive financing, he said during the official launch of the C15 Studios Ltd. partnership with the Bahamas Development Bank at the National Art Gallery, Monday, June 26, 2023.

The BDB is signing a Memorandum of Understanding that will give creatives unprecedented access to international funding through C15 Studios Ltd., which is a Caribbean cash flow solutions company based in Trinidad & Tobago specializing in the creative sector.

C15 Studios Ltd. was established in 2018, with a vision to be an integral link between the Caribbean creative sector and the financial sector, C15 Studios' objectives are:

- to enhance the creative sector for profitability and sustainability
 - to link the Caribbean creative sector with viable investors and investments
 - to become the premiere Caribbean platform for access to capital for creative professionals
- Mr. Higgs said with the Bank's "exclusive relationship" with the C15 Studios Ltd., when someone is seeking financing through this international fund, they would have to go through the BDB.

"Why is this positive? We can ensure you know exactly what your project needs to look like to get approved." Mr. Higgs explained that previously clients were sending their documentation themselves and were not getting approved. Sumayyah Cargill, Head of Strategic Development and Initiatives, BDB explained that the Bank needed to better meet the needs of Bahamian creators. Therefore, it began exploring its options.

"We got assistance from the Caribbean Development Bank in the form of regional training for the assessment of creative businesses. Ms. Cargill added, "We are grateful to our international partners for their support in building our support in this area. That regional workshop led us to C15, an innovative investment fund that was seeking to do what we also set out to do, which is fund creatives."

Lorraine O'Connor, General Manager, C15 Studios Ltd. said her company believes in the talent of Caribbean creatives and wants to move the industry from sustainability to profitability. She said the company has different levels of support or solutions to problems. "Those solutions will be driven by the BDB who is our partner here."

They will be providing financing in three different ways: equity investments, trade financing and debt financing. Other speakers during the event included Phyllicia Hanna, Director, the Bahamas Investment Authority and Brickell Pinder, Director, Trade & Industry, Ministry of Economic Affairs.



Bimini warmly welcomes Golden Jubilee Flag Relay



After several delays due to inclement weather, the Golden Jubilee Flag Relay finally landed on the quaint island of Bimini – the Big Game Fishing capital of the world.

Residents led by Local Government officials warmly welcomed the National Independence Secretariat – facilitator of the relay – to the George Weech Complex where the Flag Raising Ceremony was held on Wednesday, June 21, 2023.

The Golden Jubilee Flag Relay ends on New Providence, where the country will celebrate its 50th Independence Anniversary on July 10, 2023 on historic Clifford Park.

Lindsay Thompson, on behalf of the National Independence Secretariat said the aim of the relay is to hoist the Flag throughout the island communities in a show of unity and national pride. The Flag Relay started May 21 in Governor's Harbour, Eleuthera – 50 days to 50. Chief Councilor Glenrick Rolle in a brief reflection spoke to the significance of The Bahamas celebrating its 50th Independence as a developing country.

The ceremony included the participation of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Royal Bahamas Police Force as a joint colour guard for the hoisting of the National Flag and the National Anthem, March On Bahamaland, followed by reciting of The Pledge.

Opening prayer was said by Pastor Terez Rolle, Bimini Pastors Council, Bimini Christian Fellowship; and Fr. Ian Claridge of Our Lady's & St. Stephen's Anglican Church delivered the benediction.



Golden Jubilee Flag Relay touches down on the Berry Islands



The aquamarine, gold and black Flag touched down at Great Harbour Cay Airport as the National Independence Secretariat continued the Golden Jubilee Flag Relay leading up to the country's 50th Independence on July 10, 2023. A Flag Raising Ceremony was held on the Berry Islands the first day of summer, Wednesday, June 21 at the airport where a cross-section of the community assembled in a show of national pride despite the very warm temperature.

Lindsay Thompson, on behalf of the National Independence Secretariat said the aim of the relay is to hoist the Flag throughout the island communities in a show of unity and national pride. Family Island Administrator Deidre Fox, and Chief Councilor Ellicson Brennen both reflected on the development of the country over the past 50 years and the people, particularly the residents of the island.

The ceremony included the participation of the Royal Bahamas Defence Force and the Royal Bahamas Police Force as a joint colour guard for the hoisting of the National Flag and the National Anthem, March On Bahamaland, followed by reciting of The Pledge by students of the R.N. Gomez Comprehensive School.

And, a "special treat" of 'Lift Every Voice and Sing,' commonly referred to as "The Black National Anthem" was performed by Kinglsey Charles.

Opening prayer was said by Deacon Kirk McAulay, Church of God of Prophecy. Deaconess Christine Saunders, Associate Pastor of the Church of God of Prophecy, gave the Benediction.



Rain did not stop Golden Jubilee Flag Relay on Exuma



Rain certainly did not put a damper on the Golden Jubilee Flag Relay touching down on Exuma and its cays, famously known for breathtaking turquoise waters and swimming pigs. On Friday, June 23, 2023 a Flag Raising Ceremony was held at the George Town International Airport under a tent to shield residents from the rain, which eased to a slight drizzle.

Present was Member of Parliament for the constituency, Hon. Chester Cooper, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism, Investments and Aviation. Also in attendance were Minister of State in the Ministry of Education and Technical and Vocational Training the Hon. Zane Lightbourne, members of the uniformed branches, and Local Government Officials.

Lindsay Thompson, on behalf of the National Independence Secretariat, stated the aim of the relay is to hoist the Flag throughout the island communities in a show of unity and national pride. That same Flag will be hoisted at the national service on New Providence at Clifford Park on July 9, 2023 to usher in the country's 50th Independence on the morning of July 10. The flag relay started May 21 in Governor's Harbour, Eleuthera – 50 days to 50.

Also speaking of national pride and unity, Deputy Prime Minister Cooper praised Exumians for weathering the storm resulting in severe flooding over the past several days. He assured residents that the island will recover and the road to development will continue beyond the next 50 years. The "future looks bright", he said of Exuma.

Pastor John Rolle, President of Exuma Christian Council in his opening prayer thanked God for 50 years of Independence and for continued guidance for residents of the island.

Bahamas Development Bank Assists Creatives

