

Caymanian Times

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Royal visit next month

By Christopher Tobutt

At a joint press conference at Government House on Friday morning, His Excellency the Governor, Martyn Roper and the Honourable Premier, Alden McLaughlin announced that Their Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall will pay an official visit to the Cayman Islands on 27 and 28 March.

Planning for the visit has been underway for some weeks and is being led by the Governor's Office together with the Cabinet Office, Ministry of District Administration, Tourism and Transport and the RCIPS.

Their Royal Highnesses are due to arrive at Owen Roberts International Airport following a visit to Cuba. It is part of a larger tour of the Caribbean which will include visits to St. Lucia, Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, and Grenada. "A huge amount of detailed planning has been going on already in recent weeks," Mr. Roper said, "and I am very grateful to the honourable Premier and all the people in the departments and ministries who have been working hard, and also my excellent team in the Governor's Office who have done so much work already."

"They will have a packed and busy program. They will arrive in the late afternoon, and proceed to open the new airport terminal during a ceremony there. They will then go on to Government House for a meeting with the Premier and myself," Mr Roper continued.

"The next day they will have separate programs. His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales will first visit Cayman Brac where there will be a large community event and he will open the new swimming pool there. He will then visit Little Cayman and will take part in a marine focused event. His Royal Highness will then return to Grand Cayman and will visit the Botanic Park which was opened by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II during her visit in 1994. At the Botanic Park his Royal Highness will open the new Children's Centre, and he will also have an opportunity to see some of the work of the Blue Iguana Conservation Programme.

"Her Royal Highness will have a programme in Grand Cayman. She will visit George Town Primary School and see a cultural event there. She will also open the new Jasmine Hospice for palliative care and will visit the Crisis Centre which has



► Their Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall

... Continued story on page 3

New Scholarship Award aims to attract the creative, innovative and the visionary

The Peter N. Thomson Family Foundation on Wednesday announced the launch of The Thomson Leadership and Innovation Award scholarship programme.

This scholarship was created by the Thomson family in order to carry out the wishes of the late Peter N. Thomson to provide an opportunity of higher education for Caymanians who demonstrate the need and academic potential to attain

a post-secondary education in Canada, the United States or the United Kingdom.

The late Peter N. Thomson was one of the founding members of Caribbean Utilities Company, Ltd. (CUC) and served as a director for 25 years. His son, Peter A. Thomson, is one of the Company's longest serving directors and was CUC's Presi-

... Continued story on page 3



► Mr. Peter A. Thomson (centre), Mr. Richard Hew and Mr. Wayne Ross attending this morning's official launch

Students tour Coat of Arms exhibition



► Tarin Welds, Damar Robinson, Jylisa Seymour and Samara Walters are kept busy

By Lindsey Turnbull

A group of students had a great introduction to life as it was in the Cayman Islands when their grandparents and possible great-grandparents were growing up when they visited the excellent exhibition at the George Town Library to celebrate the 60th anniversary of Cayman's Coat of Arms.

Fittingly housed in the old library that sits in front of the main library, the exhibition takes visitors on a tour of how Cayman's Coat of Arms came into being, with plenty of informative banners and posters to explain how, in 1957, the then Commissioner, Major Alan H. Donald, put forward a proposal for a Coat of Arms for the Cayman Islands, and its subsequent journey all the way to its formal ensigning by the Queen in 1958.

The students, who were all members of St George's Anglican Church's Positive Intervention Now (PIN) after school programme, were also able to view some fascinating artefacts from years gone by, including photos and paintings, an old typewriter, a mini telescope from the Royal Navy and an old-style telephone, the latter of which proved most fascinating to the students as to how it operated. The exhibition was also crammed full

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EDITORIAL

A united front

A new day dawned in the Cayman Islands at the start of February with the coming on stream of the Customs and Border Control Agency.

This much-heralded move has been on the cards for several months. To see it come to fruition is a blessing in the sense that the wheels of government are often slow to turn when it comes putting in action steps agreed on paper.

Charles Clifford, the man heading up the new entity created by the merger of the Immigration and Customs Department, said "Our obligation as a new border control agency is to strengthen the security and stability at the frontlines of all Islands, and to ensure we continue our legacy as a safe and prosperous country for all."

Both bodies have worked separately to safeguard Cayman's borders in years gone by. We hope that their effectiveness and efficiency will be bolstered by the merger.

Cayman's porous borders are in desperate need of a unified front provid-



ing protection. The new Coast Guard unit will add to this in ensuring the marine borders of this island-nation are secured.

While these are positive developments in theory, the real hope is not only that there will be increased detection and apprehension of those breaking Cayman's laws but also send a strong signal to those who are hell bent on violating our laws.

The strengthening of our border protection can only be guaranteed if those responsible are working in unison. Caymanian Times gives our full support to this united approach to fortify the frontline defense of these Beloved Islands. They now need to be effective and not let the country down. 🌐

COMMUNITY NOTICES

Overseas Territories Attorneys General to Meet

Attorney General Hon. Samuel Bulgin, QC, will host this year's Overseas Territories (OTs) Attorneys General two-day conference, starting Tuesday, 19 February 2019.

Attendees will include all UK OTs Attorneys General as well as representatives from the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Departments of Justice of Canada and the USA and the host Cayman Islands.

Attorney General Bulgin said the conference would provide "an invaluable forum for exchange of information and experience for OTs Attorneys General". He added, "It will help in the implementation and formulation of actions plans of legal importance to the territories."

Additionally, the forum provides an annual opportunity for the attendees to discuss matters of common interest and exchange views for their territories' benefit.

Topics for discussion include disaster preparedness, anti-corruption and bribery, Financial Action Task Force reviews, extension of human rights and international conventions and



► Attorney General Hon. Samuel Bulgin, QC

child safeguarding issues within each territory. Human rights topics include LGBTQ rights.

The attendees will also discuss law revision and law reform, among other subjects. 🌐

GUIDING THE WAY 2019

EVENT

The past three Guiding the Way Events were hugely successful.

The purpose of the event is to raise awareness of Girlguiding in the Cayman Islands with the hope to attract more girls and leaders and also to promote health and wellness in the community



DETAILS

What: 5/10k Run or Walk
When: Saturday 23rd February
Time: 6am Registrations
6:30am Walk starts
6:45am Run starts

Where: Safe Haven Drive, by the Holiday Inn

Fee: Adults \$10, Children (under 10) \$5

Includes;
Refreshments
Entry into raffle draw, with lots of fantastic prizes to be won

All proceeds benefit Girlguiding Cayman Islands

Pre-register at Cayman Active at www.caymanactive.com/guiding
Please no dogs at the event.

GIRLGUIDING CAYMAN ISLANDS

Girlguiding Cayman Islands (GGCI) is a branch association of the largest female organization in the world. The organization works towards the positive development of girls and young women in the Cayman Islands.

The purpose is to help girls acquire skills for life, by teaching leadership

and values while participating in fun activities. The girls engage as they build their confidence, discover their full potential and make a positive difference in our community.

Girls can begin their Girlguiding journey from age 5 within the Rainbow section and move up through Brownies, Guides, Rangers and on to become young leaders.

VOLUNTEERS

Being involved in GGCI is very rewarding and we are always looking for volunteers to help us with the administration of running the organization and for more leaders to support unit meetings.

If you believe you could help make a positive impact, we would love to hear from you!

FURTHER INFORMATION

Allison Taylor, GGCI Commissioner - ataylor2005@hotmail.com
Charlotte Lewis, GGCI Marketing - GGCImarketing@gmail.com
girlguiding.ky
facebook.com/girlguidingcaymanislands 🌐

COMMUNITY NOTICES

CIMA Scholar Returns

The Cayman Islands Monetary Authority ("CIMA" or "the Authority") is pleased to welcome back scholarship recipient Ms. Ashleigh Powell following the recent completion of her studies at the University of Texas at San Antonio. Ms Powell graduated with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Cyber Security.

Reflecting on her time spent at university over the past two years, Ms. Powell shares, "I feel terrific to have finally graduated and returned home. I am very grateful to CIMA for investing in my education which has allowed me to better myself professionally." Ms. Powell also received a scholarship from the Cayman Islands Government.

Ms. Powell officially began her role as Network Administrator in the Information Systems Division on 2 January 2019. In this role she will be responsible for overseeing, configuring and managing CIMA's existing computer networks including workstations, file servers, associated operating systems and server side software.

CIMA's Managing Director, Mrs. Cindy Scotland said, "We congratulate Ms. Powell on this significant accomplishment. The Authority is committed to providing the necessary training opportunities to help young Caymanians assume positions within the organisation. Therefore, I am extremely pleased



► Ms. Ashleigh Powell

that the Authority was able to assist Ms. Powell in reaching her goal. We look forward to the valuable contribution she will make working in our Information Services Division."

In July 2016, Ms. Powell was one of two Caymanians awarded the Thomas Jefferson Memorial Scholarship from CIMA. The scholarship was established in 2007 in memory of the late Thomas Jefferson, former Financial Secretary and Leader of Government Business. It offers an award of CI\$25,000 per year for students pursuing a Bachelor's or Master's Degree in Finance, Accounting, Economics or Business Administration. Thus far, the Authority has awarded scholarships to six Caymanian students. 🌐

Dengue Update as of February 15, 2019

While a regional and international outbreak of dengue continues, the Public Health Department has committed to providing the Cayman Islands public with updates on the local situation.

- Since the last advisory on dengue fever issued January 8, 2019, there have been 19 investigations.
- A total of 13 results have been received.
- Six results are pending
- Of the total numbers of results received, none were positive for dengue.
- The results also yielded negative for chikungunya and Zika respectively.

Officials will provide updates on a monthly basis until the outbreak is over, increasing the frequency as required by the situation.

More about Dengue Fever

Most people recover without any complications, using pain relievers and bed rest. Once a patient has developed a fever, the infectious period lasts for one week only.

Dengue symptoms include:



- Severe frontal headache
 - Joint pain
 - Pain behind the eyes
 - Muscle and or bone pain
 - A rash (sometimes) may be visible two to five days after the onset of fever
 - Nausea or vomiting (sometimes)
- Signs of bleeding (such as: pinpoint red or purple spots on the skin, nose-bleed, bleeding gums, blood in urine or stool, or vaginal bleeding) are seen in a severe form of dengue fever, known as dengue haemorrhagic fever, severe dengue or dengue shock syndrome. 🌐

General Registry Extends Hours for Resident Companies Filing Annual Returns

General Registry, which includes the Registrar of Companies, has extended its operating hours on Thursdays to better accommodate resident companies needing to sign up on its online portal, the Cayman Business Portal (CBP), to file their annual returns and pay their annual fees.

As of 24 January, Registry began extending its hours of operation until 7pm every Thursday. The final day for the extended hours is Thursday, 28 March. Registry's offices are located on the ground floor of the Government Administration Building. Outside of the extension, the usual 8:30am-5pm office hours will be in effect on Mondays to Wednesdays and on Fridays.

"We have typically seen increased traffic from our clients due to the fact that annual fees, annual returns and benefi-

cial ownership information are due in January of each year", said Deputy Registrar General Donnell Dixon. "Invariably, there have been entities that were not able to attend our offices during regular office hours. Signing up on CBP will provide an effective and efficient tool that will help local companies fulfil their obligations'.

To facilitate a smooth CBP registration process, persons are reminded to present valid, government-issued photo identification - such as a driver's licence, passport, or voter's registration card - that corresponds to the business owner.

For general queries, contact General Registry on 946-7922, or email cigenreg@gov.ky. For more information on CBP, visit cbp.ky or email help@cbp.ky. 🌐



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A new Scholarship Award aims to attract the creative, innovative and the visionary

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dent and CEO from 1986 until he retired in 2005.

The scholarship grant of US\$30,000.00 annually will be awarded in time for its first recipient to begin college/university in September 2019.

The scholarship provides for post-secondary studies, whether they are technical, vocation or grad-


uate; of up to a maximum of four eligible and deserving students at any given time, for a period of up to four years of funding each, depending on the length of the degree, diploma, or certificate programme, and provided academic eligibility requirements are maintained as outlined by the Foundation.

The Foundation will award the annual grants through a competitive applica-

tion and review process to that applicant who showcases exemplary community involvement, particularly in leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship. The recipient has to show that he or she has plans to make a positive difference in the Cayman Islands on their return from college.

Mr. Peter A. Thomson says, "Our family is pleased to announce this scholarship fund in honour of our father whose

mission was always to give back to the Cayman Islands community particularly in the areas of the arts, culture and the creativity space. We anticipate a high level of interest and look forward to announcing the first recipient of this special scholarship."


CUC has agreed to administer the scholarship award on behalf of The Peter N. Thomson Family Foundation. 

Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall to visit Cayman

... Continued story from page 1

just opened its new Kids' line. Later on after that there will be a reception hosted by the Honourable Premier at Pedro St. James which will be a large event and a great cultural celebration. Their Royal Highnesses will depart the Cayman Islands later that night. I know the real affection that Caymanians feel towards the Royal Family and the visit is a great chance to celebrate our links with the UK and show The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall all that these wonderful islands have to offer. I hope that as many of you as possible will come out to greet them."

Premier Alden McLaughlin said "On behalf of my Government and the people of the Cayman Islands, we look forward to welcoming His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales as well as Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall to the Cayman Islands next month. I am pleased that His Royal Highness is able to see us. While we have developed and changed since his last visit many years ago, I know that Their Royal Highnesses will see that our people are as friendly, warm, and welcoming as ever.

"I don't think many people will remember, because you have to be quite old to remember these things, but His Royal Highness visited Cayman in July of 1973. I was a schoolboy of 11, and while I cannot remember the details of the visit, I can remember the tremendous excitement. So it will be very exciting to observe his impression of the significant changes we have had over the last 46 years. The population was around ten thousand people then. So it will be very interesting to talk to him about his recollections." 



► (L-r) Hon Premier Alden McLaughlin, and His Excellency the Governor, Martyn Roper

OFREG APPROVES CHANGES TO CUC CONSUMER OWNED RENEWABLE ENERGY (CORE) PROGRAMME

OfReg has approved CUC's new electricity rates for the final release of the Consumer Owned Renewable Energy programme (CORE).

The final megawatt (MW) of capacity has been released with a new rate of CI\$0.28 per kilowatt hour (kWh) for smaller systems of up to 5 kW and CI\$0.24 per kWh for systems between 5-10 kW. This is two cents less than the previous release, which took place in May 2017.

One MW of capacity is still available under the CORE programme for the public sector, which is available at the

former rate of CI\$0.21 per kWh for capacities of 20+ to 100 kW, subject to the usual peak demand limit.


CORE was established in 2011 as a limited-release programme to encourage homeowners and businesses to consider renewable energy systems. A new programme, called the Distributed Energy Resources (DER) programme, was introduced by CUC late last year. Consumers can continue to enjoy the advantages of alternative energies by installing renewable energy systems under the DER programme, where the rates for excess renewable energy sold back

to the grid are market-driven. Consumers are also free to install batteries for energy storage under this programme.

OfReg's Acting CEO and Executive Director, Energy & Utilities Gregg Anderson stated: "The programme has been very successful in launching renewable energy at the consumer level. This will be the last iteration of CORE, with the launch of the DER programme, which sells excess

energy back to the grid at market rates, therefore keeping electricity rates as low as possible for all consumers, not just those with solar power".

Information on the CUC CORE programme and demand rates is available on the CUC website.

For more information on the sectors that OfReg regulates, please visit ofreg.ky. 



► CUC Headquarter

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Upgraded recycling at North Side

The Department of Environmental Health opened a newly-upgraded recycling facility just outside the North Side Civic Centre recently, as a part of its drive to provide recycling facilities throughout the Cayman Islands. There were containers for recycling of Types One and Types Two plastics. Type One plastics are recyclable, and are the kind used to make water bottles and soda bottles. Type Two plastics are also recyclable, and are found in objects like detergent bottles and toys.

DEH Assistant Director, Richard Simms said: "This is part of the DEH's 'Go East' initiative. We placed the two recycle bins here since 30 January this year in an effort to capture as many recyclables as possible so that we can minimize the growth of the landfill. We have been doing so well over the last year with our initiative, particularly with our number one and number two plastics.

"Since 2017, we have had a 24 per cent increase in collecting recyclables which is remarkable. We are getting the message across so that people can change the culture: instead of throwing everything in the bin, start recycling," he said.

But it can be difficult changing the habits of a lifetime overnight, and so



► Richard Simms

he had some practical advice: "If you can't recycle everything, choose one or two things to start. You can venture out like I did with my family concentrate on one thing, plastics, so you concentrate on plastics for a while and now we are doing everything: Boxes, cans, everything."

"We want to continue to educate, and encourage the public, and this is our effort to make sure we are doing our part.



► (L-r) Richard Simms, Captain Eugene Ebanks, Michael Haworth, Tanya Legall Environmental Health Officer, Eastern Districts, Angello Roye, Mark Bothwell, Ronald Dilbert

Sharing some recent statistics, of quantities shipped for recycling in 2018:

"Aluminum cans, 35 427 pounds; cardboard and mixed paper 44,085 pounds; and Plastics, 113, 453 pounds. We are making remarkable progress with these kinds of figures. I implore each and every household to continue to make the effort, to reduce all that goes into the landfill, and when you can re-use then re-use.

Captain Eugene Ebanks said: "The DEH embarked on a program last December to increase the number recycling containers of plastics located at each of its supermarkets depots. On January 30 this year two new recycling containers have been placed on the ground at the North Side Civic Centre. Since then, the Department has installed three additional containers at this site. The recently placed containers will facilitate the recycling of One and Two type plastics, metal containers as well as glass and ceramic items. 96.48 tons were shipped in 2018 while 77.89 tons were shipped in 2017. I would like to thank the DEH for

ensuring that as a country we are on the right path to addressing recyclable waste on all of our islands, both with educating our communities and ensuring we do our part as a ministry."

The Department of Environmental Health (DEH) accepts paper (including photocopy paper, cereal boxes, newspapers, cardboard, and clean pizza boxes), glass (including bottles, flatware, stemware, and ceramics), some plastics such as water bottles, detergent bottles, and anything marked with a 1 or 2 (denoting the type of plastic) on the bottom, as well as aluminum (including soda cans, food tins, and cooking foil).

It is important that all items are reasonably clean or they will be considered contaminated and may not be recycled. Also, do not throw recycling into the bins in plastic bags, it should really be thrown in loose, as plastic bags are considered contaminants as well. Recyclables are collected by the DEH from various drop-off bins around the island, which include all of the major grocery stores. 🌐



► Captain Eugene Ebanks



► Richard Simms tries it out

PIN Students tour Coat of Arms exhibition

... Continued story from page 1

of every day items that people would have used in daily life, such as cooking implements, along with detailed embroidery and quilt work with which Caymanian women have had a long association, having been masters of this particular art.

Students were required to find answers to specific questions on the devel-

opment of the Coat of Arms and detail their favourite artefacts, many of whom said the typewriter was their favourite item, with one noting that it was especially clever because the user did not need a printer to use it.

Marlene Ricketts is the PIN coordinator. She said that touring the exhibition had been a great experience for students.

"Not only did the students get to appreciate some vital elements of their history, they were also able to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties of life for their relatives in the years gone by. I think this helped them appreciate all that they have today," she confirmed. "At PIN we aim to expose our students to Caymanian history, culture and heritage to help them gain a broader understanding of where they came from. This exhibition was a great way to encourage this understanding."

PIN takes place from 3pm to 6pm Tuesday to Thursday and is a programme specifically designed to help year six students take a positive path to adulthood as they prepare for high school. Students are given assistance to develop intellectually, spiritually and emotionally and enjoy a wide range of activities. Ms Ricketts is greatly assisted by members of the community who volunteer to work with students and help with their development. 🌐



► Tarin Welds enjoys the exhibits



► PIN coordinator Marlene Ricketts with students Ashley Pattico, Justin McField and Alexis Espeut



► Fred Boothe Jr is hard at work



► PIN students enjoyed their time at the Library



► Samara Walters is fascinated by the exhibits

Opposition Highlights Cruise Ship / Cargo Port Financing Conflict

With final bids on the cruise ship and expanded cargo port facilities due at the end of next month, the Leader of the Opposition the Hon. Ezzard Miller has red-flagged a conflict between that bidding process requiring 100% financing and efforts by the Ministry of Tourism to secure supplementary funding under a separate arrangement.

A deal by Government with two major cruise lines to help finance the construction of the facility was disclosed in the *Cayman Compass* article dated February 7, 2019, "Cruise port petition puts dock debate on collision course."

However, additional information to which Mr. Miller has since been privy indicates that the Ministry of Tourism has been actively negotiating with up to four additional cruise lines, seeking loans towards defraying the cost of the design, building, and maintenance of the cruise ship and expanded cargo port facilities.

According to the sources, who have spoken on condition of anonymity, it is being proposed that these loans from the cruise industry are to be repaid through rebatement of port charges, Mr. Miller said.

In response to the news of these developments, Mr. Miller contends that this parallel arrangement would effectively alter the RFP that has been issued to the three bidders on the port project.

Consequently, he has raised a number of questions, among which are why

supplementary funding has become necessary and how these actions would impact the Procurement Committee's ability to carry out its role:

- "Does this mean that the short-listed bidders are experiencing difficulty in raising financing?"
- If so:
 - * How would the ministry know this?
 - * What are the implications of those financing issues for the bidders and their longer-term capacity to honour their contracts, and
 - * How will the negotiations for and acquisition of supplementary funding impact the Procurement Committee's evaluation of the bids?"

Mr. Miller, who also chairs the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and is therefore familiar with the requirements under the Procurement Law 2016, noted that among the principles at risk is that of "transparency," one of the seven codes of practice defined in Schedule 1 of that law:

"Transparency
Public sector entities should ensure that there is openness and clarity on procurement policy and its delivery. All proposed procurement shall be published on the Government's website in addition to the results of procurement."

Meanwhile, Mr. Miller noted, in a matter of six weeks the cruise/cargo port "bidders will have concluded their financial arrangements in accordance with the ministry's existing RFP requiring 100% financing."

Unless there are "some rapid interventions" that will appropriately address the conflict, "the potential clash in the two seemingly concurrent processes," Mr. Miller said, "would drastically alter the RFP, presenting a complication in the final stages of bidding that would make it impossible for the Public Procurement Committee to properly evaluate the three bids."

Should that complication continue to its logical end, "The Public Procurement Committee would therefore be well advised to reject the bids and to require the bidding process to be re-started," Mr. Miller said, adding: "Barring urgent adequate interventions, this is the least that should be done out of an abundance of caution to ensure that the bidding process and its outcome do not fail to meet the requirements of the Procurement Law, with all those far-reaching implications, to the ultimate detriment of the project and the people of the Cayman Islands."

As it is now, if the parallel negotiations continue on their track, Mr. Miller said, "the issue and publication of a new



▶ Leader of the Opposition the Hon. Ezzard Miller

RFP would seem not only unavoidable but absolutely imperative."

Nevertheless, Mr. Miller emphasised that, while he will continue to flag these serious concerns, he remains committed to the people-initiated referendum initiative and to the belief that it will have a positive final resolution.

"The referendum drive is gaining momentum as it nears its target number of signatures," the Leader of the Opposition said, adding that he and his colleagues in the Opposition are engaging in a final drive to push the numbers over the top.

"I am confident that members of the public will have their say on this very important national issue that will impact us irrevocably now and in the future," he said. 🌐



▶ Proposed cruise dock compressed



Ministry of Tourism Addresses Cruise Ship / Cargo Port Financing

At every significant milestone the Ministry of Tourism has kept the public informed and updated on the latest developments regarding the cruise berthing facility project, including the financing aspects of the project.

On 30th November, 2018, the Premier formally announced to the public that two cruise lines had made a financial commitment to the cruise berthing project, and stated that "those commitments, coupled with the finance to be provided by the preferred bidder on the project, effectively ensure that no public money will be required to build the new berths."

A press release dated 1st December, 2018 was subsequently issued by the Ministry of Tourism which clearly indicated that "the agreements with Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd and Carnival Corporation, form part of the final tender process," and specified that "the financing will be provided in partnership with the preferred bidder that will be selected when the tendering process has concluded." (Emphasis added)

The cruise lines agreement was included in the Invitation to Submit Final Tenders (ISFT) that was sent by the Ministry of Tourism to each of the final three bidders, and this was also explained in

the Ministry's press release of 1st December, 2018.

The Ministry has actively sought to finance the cruise berthing facility using the Design, Build, Finance, Maintain (DBFM) financial framework, which is the type of public-private partnership best suited to large scale infrastructure projects. This is in keeping with the outline business case which recommended a public-private partnership involving cruise line participation as the preferred procurement model.

Minister for Tourism, Hon. Moses Kirkconnell explained that the cruise lines involvement underscores their commitment to the project and ensures that the number of passengers brought to our islands will be maintained. Once the piers are operational, cruise passenger numbers are expected to increase to 2.3M annually.

"The DBFM model means that the project will not require any government loans or bonds," the Minister stated. "Construction of the piers, including the expansion of the cargo port will be paid for by the cruise lines using the passenger fees which would otherwise have been used for ferrying passengers to and from the cruise ships."

This information has been shared by Minister Kirkconnell in various interviews, speeches and media releases, as well as in the Legislative Assembly and at the public meeting held on 26th September, 2018. Additionally, the Ministry



▶ Minister for Tourism, Hon. Moses Kirkconnell

has issued full page infomercials to help the public understand that the berthing facility will continue to be owned by the people of the Cayman Islands and operated by the Cayman Islands Port Authority. Speaking specifically about the project's timeline, Minister Kirkconnell emphasized that the information and data gathering aspects of the cruise berthing project started in 2013 and the bidding process has been ongoing since May 2017. "The project is now in its sixth year and has reached the stage where three bidders will be submitting their final bids shortly. I look forward to updating the public when those final submissions are received and the successful bidder has been identified," he said. 🌐





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FIRST ROBOTICS LAUNCHED IN CAYMAN

Five of the Cayman Islands' foremost corporate leaders in STEM have come together for the first time to support a new robotics initiative.

Dart Minds Inspired has partnered with Aureum Re, Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC), Digicel, and Health City Cayman to bring FIRST robotics programmes to high school students in the Cayman Islands.

FIRST, which stands for 'For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology', is a US-based non-profit organisation that inspires young people to be leaders in science and technology.

Dart Education Programmes Manager Glenda McTaggart says the decision to introduce FIRST as a Minds Inspired programme was prompted by the experiences of Adrian Phillips-Hernandez (Cayman Prep and High School), Ethan Cronier (St. Ignatius Catholic School) and Joe Allom-Perez (Cayman International School), who represented the Cayman Islands at last year's FIRST Global Challenge.

"Minds Inspired was invited to participate in the 2018 challenge and, not wanting to miss the opportunity, we quickly selected Adrian, Ethan and Joe based on their grades and their commitment to STEM," she explains. "After exper-

riencing the incredible learning opportunities provided by the challenge, we knew it was something that all students in the Cayman Islands should have the chance to participate in going forward."

Themed around the 14 Grand Challenges of Engineering identified by the National Academy of Engineering, the FIRST Global Challenge empowers

young people to use STEM to solve global problems like access to clean water and sustainable energy resources.

STEM FOR SUCCESS

Dart CEO Mark VanDevelde explains that nurturing local talent in the STEM subjects is essential to workforce development.

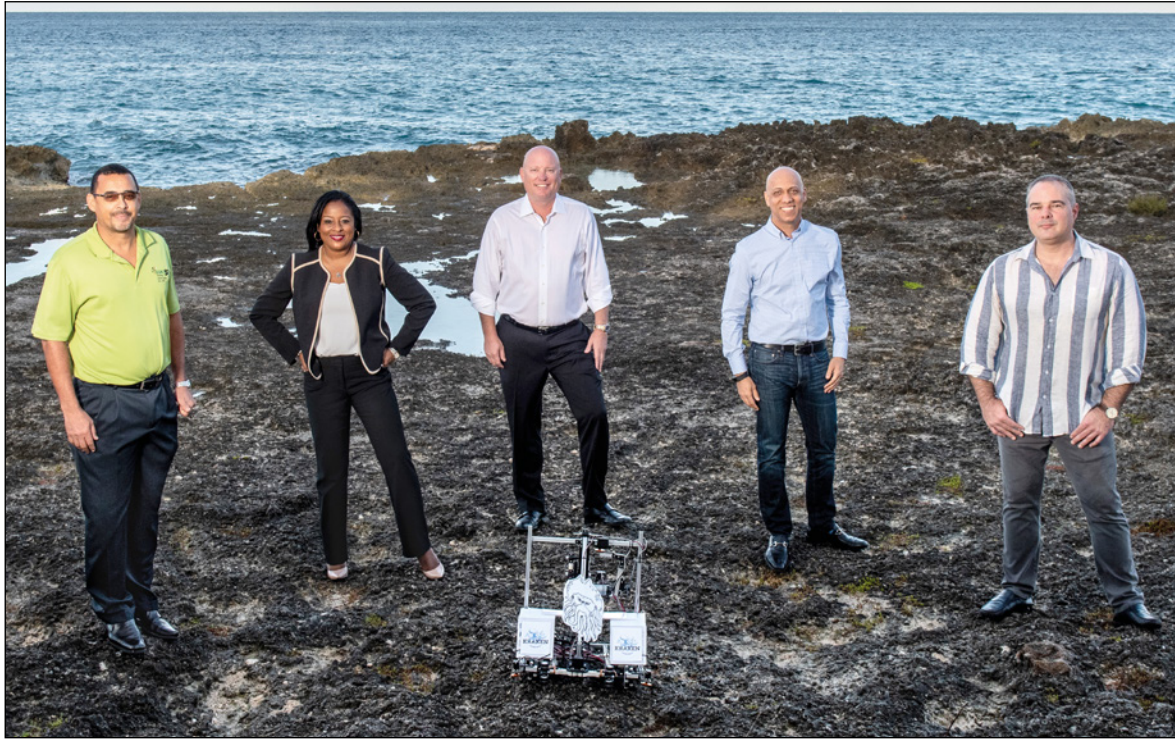
"Our focus on STEM is based on the Dart family's belief that these subjects are fundamental to building the skills necessary to succeed academically and develop a diverse, resilient workforce," Mr. VanDevelde says. "It was a logical decision to partner with like-minded, local businesses to bring FIRST Robotics programmes to the Cayman Islands."

Each of the sponsoring companies is associated with one of the STEM subjects: Health City Cayman represents science, Digicel represents technology, CUC represents engineering, and Aureum Re represents mathematics.

"As Cayman's economy continues to evolve, the local demand for STEM jobs - and to be more specific for jobs which use robotics and artificial intelligence - will continue to increase. Our organisations share a common goal in ensuring our young people are prepared to fill those roles."

The 2019 FIRST programme will launch with a "Rover Ruckus" themed interschool robotics tournament in May that will serve as a prerequisite for nomination to the National Team - which will represent the Cayman Islands at the 2019 FIRST Global Challenge.

For more information, visit mindsinspired.ky.



► Dart Minds Inspired has partnered with Aureum Re, Caribbean Utilities Company (CUC), Digicel, and Health City Cayman to bring FIRST robotics programmes to high school students in the Cayman Islands. From left, CUC President & CEO Richard Hew, Health City Cayman Global Sales Manager Kafara Augustine, Aureum RE CEO David Towriss, Digicel CEO Raul Nicholson-Coe, and Dart CEO Mark VanDevelde, are joined by "Kraken", the robot designed by local students to compete in the 2018 FIRST Global Challenge in Mexico. This year's FIRST programme will launch with a "Rover Ruckus" themed interschool robotics tournament in May which will act as a prerequisite for nomination to the National Team to represent the Cayman Islands at the 2019 FIRST Global Challenge

Cayman Academy Cancer March

Around 300 students from Cayman Academy marched from their school on Walkers Road held a big march, right up the road to the Cancer Society on Maple Road, recently. They were going to deliver a big check for \$4,152 to the Society. It was money that all the kids had helped raise, going around to friends and family and people who they knew with their Stride Against Cancer forms. It was part of the School's Cancer Awareness Program that went throughout January.

The student, specially dressed in pink for cancer awareness, carried a big banner. They had been eager to go from early, but had to wait a little while for some police officers from the RCIPS to make it safe. Everyone had done their part, and it is not always easy when you are small, asking people them to donate for a good cause, so they were all very brave and they had all worked hard. But three of the students had really excelled, and Sophia Hamilton, Chari-

ties Coordinator, They were Gabrielle Coleman, who had raised an amazing \$1,111; Roger Alex Johnson II who had raised a wonderful \$400, and Gabrielle Williams, who had raised a great big \$232.

Director of the Cancer Society, Jennifer Weber, expressed her gratitude when accepting the check from Cayman Academy Principal O'Neil Duncan, who had all gathered outside the Cancer Society offices.



► Cayman Academy kids excelled when they raised more than four thousand dollars for the Cancer Society recently

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Cayman Prep victorious in Jamaica

Recently Cayman Prep and High School took a group of 27 students to the American International School of Kingston (AISK) for their 6 aside Soccerfeva tournament hosting schools from all over the region. We entered 2 CPHS teams along with 9 additional students (5 girls and 4 boys) who represented 2 Caribbean select teams.

The Caribbean select teams were made up of students from BVI, Jamaica and Cayman. As you can imagine on day one it took a while for both sides to gel but once they did both teams finished strongly. The girls gelled so well they ended up in the semi-finals of the 'Champions Cup' on the second day of the tournament and the boys in the Shield semi-finals. The Caribbean select girls went on to finish third overall with goals from Lydia Smith and Kate Young in their final game. The boys select team went undefeated on day two to lift the shield with goals from Evin Johnson and Jack Lomax helping them on their way. It was a fantastic achievement for both teams who walked away with not only some silverware but many new friendships.

The boys CPHS team started slowly losing to a strong Campion (Jamaica) side. This meant they must win their next two matches to reach the Champions Cup on the second day. They dispatched a Hillel 'B' (Jamaica) side 4-0 with goals from Josh Small (2), Aaron Jarvis

and Victor Thompson and Josh was on the scoresheet again in the third match as they beat a competitive Lyford Cay School (Nassau) 1-0.

The next day the semi-final was a great match and was evenly poised until the boys switched off at a set piece allowing the Hillel 'A' to score from a free kick. Hillel defended resolutely for the final 10 minutes to see out the game. The CPHS boys bounced back defeating AISK (Jamaica) to secure third place overall.

The girls team started out very strongly and won all of their group games beating Campion 4-0, Lucaya (Freeport) 2-0 and Hillel 4-0. Favourites going into the knock out stage they defeated the Caribbean select team (containing 5 Prep girls) in a tense semi-final that finished 1-0. This meant they were against their old rivals and former hosts Lyford Cay (Nassau). The girls played their best football in the final and proved to be too strong for everyone running out winners 3-0 goals coming from Jenna Edwards, Zahra Powell and Molly Kehoe. Molly Kehoe was also top goal scorer and voted MVP of the whole tournament.

This is the third victory at this international tournament and the sixth international tournament victory for most of the girls. We are very proud of their outstanding achievement and the way they are role models both on and off the field.



DPSC unveils new radio system

Anyone who was here during Hurricane Ivan knows exactly how important reliable radio communications are for all the emergency services in times of a disaster, and so recently the Ministry of Home Affairs announced that the country's new interoperable radio system is now fully functional across all three Islands. There was a special ribbon-cutting ceremony at a big radio tower in West Church Street in West Bay to celebrate.

The upgrade from the former 800 Megahertz radio system to the modern, Motorola p25 Public Safety Radio Communications System has integrated all public safety radio users on a common platform to enable greater inter-agency collaboration as well as facilitate more efficient responses.

The mission-critical radio system, its infrastructure and accompanying accessories have been implemented at sites in the Government Administration Building, the Citrus Grove Building, Radio Cayman, Northward, Frank Sound, East End, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac East. The new system replaces both the hardware and the software of

the system that has been in place for the last fifteen years.

Fifteen years is a lifetime when it comes to technology, and one of the problems with the older system was gaps in coverage. As a result, three new radio frequency sites in West Bay, Frank Sound and in the West End of Cayman Brac were identified for brand new installation locations of the P25 radio system hardware, thereby ensuring seamless communications.

The Minister with Constitutional responsibility for Home Affairs, Hon. Tara Rivers, JP, MLA, other government dignitaries and public safety representatives gathered at the new radio bunker to see the most modern radio system for public safety and emergency communication in the region, in action.

"In keeping with this Government's stated objective to build stronger, safer communities and provide support for the most vulnerable within the Cayman Islands, as part of the 2018-2019 Strategic Policy Statement, today's opening ceremony marks the achievement of the critical goal of enhanced capability

and interoperability for all first responder agencies," Minister Rivers said. "The investment in this country-wide project clearly demonstrates the Government's commitment to promoting a safer and more resilient Cayman Islands."

DPSC commenced the installation phase of the upgrade programme late last year, starting in the sister islands. DPSC Director, Julian Lewis, said, "Changes in our Islands' Infrastructure, such as the increase in building heights and capacity, created challenges for the performance of the original radio system. As part of our mission to improve the indoor and outdoor coverage for radio users, a study of the buildings and locations, with important information on radio site placement, was provided to the radio project team in order to ensure the selection of optimal locations for additional and new radio repeater sites.

"The system testing and radio user reports have confirmed that the installation of the hardware at the three new locations provides excellent radio coverage that is stronger than ever before, stretching to all parts of the Islands."



► DPSC Director, Julian Lewis

Mr. Lewis said a substantial amount of work has been done to successfully implement the new technology.

"Communication and the ability to access information quickly have a direct impact on how first responders execute their missions," he explained. "The upgrade will play an essential role in enhancing service delivery, shortening response times in emergency situations, and efficiently interconnecting all first responders to respond to any type of emergency or large-scale event."

All public safety agencies have begun replacing their current hand-held radio units with the new technology, with around 1,000 radios being handed out to first responders during the initial roll-out.

The Ministry of Home Affairs signed the agreement with Motorola Solutions on 14 December 2017.



► Janet Hernandez of Motorola



► (Left to right) Hon. Minister Tara Rivers, Hon Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, McKeeva Bush, and DPSC Director Julian Lewis

America's 10 Most Popular Foreign Fishing Spots

The US has some of the world's best fishing. Marlin, Tarpon, Bass – America's got it all. With all these amazing species on your doorstep, you have to wonder why anyone fishes abroad. However, some places are well worth traveling to. We took a look through our data to find the most popular foreign fishing spots in the world.

The top fishing vacations all have a lot in common: sun, sea, sand, and super-sized sport fish. Many of the towns on our list are household names, but there are a few spots that might surprise you. One thing's for sure: Go to any one of these places and you're in for a fishing trip that you'll never forget!

10. Bridgetown, Barbados

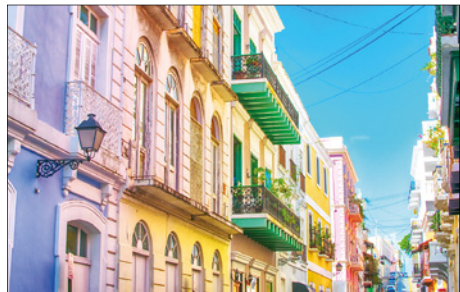


If you're looking for white sands, warm seas, and chilled, island vibes, Barbados is about as close as it comes to paradise. The country is well known for its warm welcome and delicious food and drinks. It's also one of the safest countries in the Caribbean, letting you really relax and drink it all in – and we're not just talking about the cocktails.

Don't get too relaxed, because you've got the fight of your life ahead of you. Head offshore and you'll find Blue and White Marlin, Sailfish, and maybe even Spearfish. Barbados' signature species is Wahoo, which you can reliably catch even on a half day trip. They're a staple part of Bayan food and are known locally as "Kingfish," in case you're wondering why King Mackerel is so tasty all of a sudden.

Rather spend the day in the water than on it? Who can blame you! Spearfishing is very popular here (just look at the flag) and there are several specialists based out of Bridgetown. Just be sure to take off your camo once you get back to shore because it's actually illegal to wear it on the street in Barbados.

9. San Juan, Puerto Rico



You might be thinking, "Does Puerto Rico count as abroad?" We'll leave that debate for the comments. You need a plane and a passport to get there, so it makes it onto the list – especially considering the huge number of fishing trips Americans took there last year. And who can blame them? San Juan is awesome!

San Juan is best known for its colorful buildings and impressive colonial architecture. Or is it the stunning beaches and gin clear seas? No, wait, it's the great nightlife and world-famous music scene. In fact, the city has all this and more. But for us, the biggest reason to visit is hiding in the shallow waters that surround the city: Tarpon.

Both the San Jose Lagoon and the San Juan Bay are home to Silver Kings worthy of the throne. You can catch Tarpon well over 100 pounds just a stone's throw from the busy streets of downtown San Juan. The deep sea bite is just as good, with Blue and White Marlin, Yellowfin Tuna, and much, much more. Did we mention you can also catch three species of Bass in the local lakes? Seriously, time is the only limit to what San Juan has to offer.

8. Oranjestad, Aruba



Aruba's capital city has plenty of surprises up her sleeve. Even after you get over the gaudy Dutch architecture, you'll be surprised to find pilsner beer and fried cheese alongside Caribbean staples like fried plantains and rum. Oranjestad is a town with some real

heart and plenty of character, though – enough to tempt tourists back year after year.

In local Papiamentu, Oranjestad is known simply as "Playa." Take a stroll down to the sea and you won't need three guesses to know why. The local beaches are classic postcard material, with turquoise water and clean sand. You could spend days lounging, swimming, and snorkeling without ever getting bored.

And if you ever do, there's plenty of action to keep you busy. The shallows are home to Bonefish, Snook, and baby Tarpon. Head a little farther, and you'll find Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, and Yellowfin Tuna, quickly followed by Blue and White Marlin. The hardest part will be choosing what to fish for.

7. George Town, Cayman Islands



George Town is all about big fun in shallow water. From cuddling stingrays to riding on swimming horses, the local wildlife offers some truly unique experiences. You've also got sea turtles, dolphins, and an endless array of colorful reef fish to swim with. You can see why Grand Cayman is one of the most popular diving spots on the planet.

Snorkeling and scuba diving aren't the only ways to get up-close-and-personal with the Caymans Islands' sea life, though. Climb aboard a charter boat, and you can be fishing Marlin-deep waters in minutes. Otherwise, stay in the shallows for a genuine chance of an Inshore Grand Slam. Tarpon, Bonefish, Permit, and Snook all thrive in these crystal clear waters.

George Town isn't the biggest city in the Caribbean, but it has plenty going on to give you a break from the beach. The town is famous for its tax-free shopping, so splash out on something special to remember your trip by. Otherwise, enjoy an unforgettable beachside meal or a delicious cocktail. The signature drink is a "mudslide," which is much tastier than it sounds.

6. Nassau, Bahamas



You may have noticed a theme in America's most popular foreign fishing spots. The seas have to be impossibly blue and surreally clear. The beaches need to be pure white sand with plenty of palm trees. And if you can't get a good dose of rum in a colorful cocktail, you'd better forget it. The Bahamas tick these boxes so hard they break the pen in the process.

Nassau is more than just a beach with a town attached, though. The nation's capital is a lively city of a quarter of a million people, with a rich history and a real love of upbeat music. Sure, you can lounge on beaches or swim with pigs until the cows come home, but save some time for the sights and sounds of the town itself.

Just don't get too distracted – the surrounding waters are full of sea monsters just waiting for a hook to drift their way. The shallow flats are a mecca for fly fishers, with Permit, Tarpon, Bonefish, more Bonefish, and yes, even more Bonefish. The bluewater bite is just as hot, with Sailfish, Blue Marlin, Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, and even Swordfish.

5. Punta Cana, Dominican Republic



Punta Cana has long been a byword for big Billfish. Whether you're after the mammoth Blue Marlin of summer or



the incredible numbers of winter White Marlin, you're never far from apex predators in the Dominican Republic's capital city. As well as Marlin, you also have Sailfish, Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, Yellowfin Tuna – all your big game favorites.

It's not all offshore action, mind you. Punta Cana's bluewater bite is certainly the most famous, but the shallows are also full of fish. Snook and Tarpon both spend much of the year here, as do Barracuda and a variety of tasty reef fish.

When you've finally got your fill of fishing, enjoy everything else the town has to offer. As well as the desert island essentials, you'll find stunning scenery in places like Hoyo Azul and Scape Park. Stop off at the ChocoMuseo for a free and fascinating look into everyone's favorite treat, then relax with a Mamajuana at a beachside bar.

4. Puerto Vallarta, Mexico



You may have been wondering where Mexico was on our list of the most popular foreign fishing spots. We haven't forgotten about it. If anything, we're saving the best for last. Puerto Vallarta has something for everyone, from remote beaches accessible only by boat to pumping clubs and beaches packed with all-night parties. The best part? It offers just as much variety when you get out on the water.

Puerto Vallarta has a full menu of sportfishing options, neatly packaged into different fishing spots. Spend the day in the local waters for Cubera Snapper, Jacks, and Roosterfish. Head south around the bay to catch them while also exploring the dramatic rock formations of Los Arcos. Otherwise, you can go offshore.

The main spots are Islas Marietas, El Morro, La Corbetaña, and El Banco. The farther you go, the bigger the fish will be. They range from Mahi Mahi and Sailfish to Yellowfin Tuna, Blue, Black, and Striped Marlin, and huge Hammerhead Sharks. Every spot has its signature species, so you can pretty much pick your fish based on where you go.

3. Jaco, Costa Rica



Costa Rica is a true nirvana for deep sea anglers. You can catch Billfish here more reliably than you could ever imagine. And the country's strong emphasis on fish tagging and safe release means that people will be able to enjoy the action for years to come.

Costa Rica is awesome, sure, but why Jaco specifically? Well, it has the biggest and most well-maintained sportfishing fleet in the country, for one. Marina Los Sueños sits just around the head of the bay with hundreds of boats just waiting to take you offshore. Los Sueños has all the makings of a luxury vacation: spas, golf courses, fine dining – the works.

After a more down-to-earth Costa Rican experience? Jaco itself is a qui-

et town where beautiful beach meets dense jungle. Trips often launch right off the beach, with small dinghies ferrying groups out to charter boats moored in the bay. It's a world away from the 5-star glamor of Los Sueños, but it has a friendly vibe with that classic "pura vida" feeling that makes Costa Rica special.

2. Cancun, Mexico



Cancun needs no introduction as an American vacation spot. It's one of the most popular resort towns and probably the busiest Spring Break destination on earth. Resort after resort line the beach in Cancun's "Zona Hotelera" and the city's nightlife is nothing short of legendary. As if that wasn't enough, the town is also surrounded by an all-star cast of game fish.

Marlin, Sailfish, Mahi Mahi, Wahoo, Tuna – they're all here and they're ready for a fight. You may have to go 20 miles out to find them, but it's well worth it when the reels start screaming. And if you don't fancy the long boat ride offshore, you can find just as much action inshore.

Cancun's shallow seas are mainly known for their surfers and jet-skiers, but there's a lot more going on under the surface. Hit the right spot, and you'll find Permit, Snook, Bonefish, Tarpon, Jack Crevalle, Barracuda, and more. Finding them isn't hard, either, with plenty of eager charter captains waiting to take you out.

1. Cabo San Lucas, Mexico



No surprises which town came out on top. Cabo San Lucas is about as good as it gets for deep sea sportfishing. The town is surrounded by a royal flush of big game species, from Blue, Black, and Striped Marlin to Sailfish, Swordfish, and Yellowfin Tuna. Turn your attention inshore, and you'll find Roosterfish, Jack Crevalle, Snook, Sierra Mackerel – in fact, it would be easier just to list the fish you can't catch here!

With so many awesome hookups, it should come as no surprise that Cabo is also home to incredible fishing tournaments. The most famous of them, dubbed "the World's Most Expensive Fishing Tournament," is the Bisbee's Black and Blue. If you like the idea of a hundred boats racing offshore in search of monster Marlin, opening morning is a sight you can't miss.

Fishing isn't the only thing that puts Cabo at the top of America's travel itinerary. People have been coming here for decades, and dozens of resorts have sprung up to cater to the crowds. You also have mile after mile of beaches with great surf and soft sands. Then there are the golf courses, bustling bars, and awe-inspiring Baja scenery if you take a trip out of town. Cabo San Lucas more than earns its place at the top of the list. 🌐

Jamaican Man Jailed After Threatening Former Head of FBI and CIA

A Jamaican lottery scammer who tried to extort tens of thousands of dollars from the only person to head both the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), has been jailed in the United States.

Keniel Aeon Thomas pleaded guilty to the extortion charge and was given a six-year prison term by Chief Judge Beryl Howell of the district court in Washington.

The matter involving 94-year-old ex-FBI and CIA director William Webster, and his wife, Lynda, was one of several scams Thomas was involved in, the judge noted, as she pointed out that he had more than 30 victims and had collected hundreds of thousands of dollars from them.

In his attempt to extort the Websters in 2004, Thomas had called their home several times, identifying himself as David Morgan from a company called Mega Millions. In the first call, which was answered by Mr Webster – who was also a federal district and appellate judge in the 1970s – Thomas told him he had won

US\$72 million and a Mercedes-Benz and just needed to wire US\$50,000 to cover taxes to collect.

The next day, he reached Mr Webster again but the elderly man told him he didn't have the money. In two subsequent calls, which were answered by Mrs Webster, Thomas said she needed to pay US\$6,000 or he'd kill her and her husband.

But given the former law enforcement top official's background, he and his wife had got the FBI involved, and that eventually led authorities to Thomas in late 2017. The Jamaican was arrested as he disembarked a plane in New York.

At Thomas' sentencing, judge Howell commended Webster – the third director of the FBI who then moved to the CIA's top position in 1987 – and his wife for their quick thinking in the matter.

However, she questioned why the Justice Department hadn't brought Thomas to justice sooner after the Websters' ordeal, for which prosecutors filed a criminal complaint.

Before his sentence was handed down, Thomas turned to the couple sit-



► Former FBI and CIA director William Webster (above) and his wife got the FBI involved after Jamaican Keniel Aeon Thomas started calling their home

ting in the courtroom and said: "I really didn't mean to hurt you guys."

"We Jamaican people love you guys. We love tourists," he added, as he faced the cou-

ple who had often travelled to his homeland but say they are now afraid to visit.

After he serves his sentence, Thomas will be deported to Jamaica. 🌐

Tourism Growth of 6-7 Per Cent Expected This Year Following Better-Than-Predicted 2018 Performance

The Caribbean tourism sector is projected to record strong growth in 2019 on the heels of a stronger-than-expected performance last year.

The Caribbean Tourism Organization (CTO), the authority on regional tourism statistics and performance, is forecasting 6-7 per cent growth this year, continuing an upward trend which began last September.

"We are projecting that tourist arrivals will increase by between six and seven per cent in 2019, as the damaged infrastructure in the hurricane-impacted destinations returns to capacity. Similarly, cruise arrivals should expand by a further four per cent to five per cent," Ryan Skeete the CTO's acting director of research revealed at the Caribbean Tourism Performance Review news conference at the CTO's headquarters this morning.

Skeete did caution of possible "significant headwinds to navigate", including the outcome of the Brexit negotiations in the UK, the on-going trade war between the United States and China and potential extreme weather events in the destinations and marketplaces.

Still, he said, with global demand for international travel expected to remain strong, underpinned by healthy economic activity, and with improved air connectivity helping to boost arrivals, the outlook for Caribbean tourism in 2019 was cautiously optimistic.

The CTO research director revealed that a robust 9.8 per cent growth during the September to Decem-

ber period last year, led to a stronger-than-projected performance. It was a significant turnaround from the previous eight months of decline.

"Even the destinations that were severely impacted by the 2017 hurricanes, despite registering overall double-digit declines last year, experienced a significant turnaround during the last four months, registering triple-digit increases during this period," Skeete told the briefing, which was streamed 'live' to an international audience.

The 29.9 million tourist visits in 2018 represented the second highest number of visitors to the Caribbean on record, surpassed only by the 30.6 million who visited in 2017. And while this represented a 2.3 per cent decline overall, it was better than the anticipated three per cent to four per cent fall-off.

"With a strong performance during the last four months of 2018, including a robust showing by countries impacted by the 2017 hurricanes, the evidence suggests that Caribbean tourism is on the upswing," Skeete declared.

According to information compiled from CTO member countries, Canada was the strongest performing market – its 3.9 million visits represented a 5.7 per cent rise. The intra-Caribbean market had its best performance ever, reaching two million visitors, while South America produced 1.9 million tourist visits, representing a 3.6 per cent increase. Arrivals from Europe grew



► CTO's acting director of research Ryan Skeete addressing this morning's news conference

by a modest 1.3 per cent, with UK arrivals remaining flat at an estimated 1.3 million.

However, the United States, which remains the region's leading market, was down, with the 13.9 million American tourist visits representing a 6.3 per cent fall. This was due mainly to steep declines in arrivals to popular destinations impacted by the hurricanes, such as Puerto Rico, which was down by 45.6 per cent, and St Maarten, which fell by 79 per cent.

This notwithstanding, there was a healthy 28 per cent rise in arrivals from the US in the fourth quarter, reflecting the strong turnaround during this period. 🌐

IMF Pleased With Barbados' Economic Recovery Plan Progress

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has praised government for its execution so far of the Barbados Economic Recovery and Transformation (BERT) plan, which is funded by a US\$290 million Extended Fund Facility (EFF) from the Washington-based financial institution.

An IMF mission said in a statement issued yesterday that the Mia Mottley-led administration had met all indicative targets up to the end of last year.

"Barbados continues to make good progress in implementing its ambitious and comprehensive economic reform programme," Bert van Selm, head of the team that visited February 5 to 8, said

as the IMF pointed out that targets for foreign exchange reserves, domestic assets and the primary surplus of income needed to pay back its debt, were all met by a wide margin.

"Good progress has been made in implementing end-December 2018 structural benchmarks under the EFF. Two key pieces of legislation – the Public Financial Management Act, and the Town and Country Planning Act – were adopted in early 2019. Preparation of the budget for FY2019/20 targeting a primary surplus of six per cent of GDP is well under way. Full year effects of reforms set in motion during the current (2018/19) fiscal year, including the in-

roduction of several new taxes and ongoing streamlining of public sector work force at state-owned enterprises, should help achieve this target."

The IMF added that a detailed assessment of the budget will be made when it is finalized.

It also suggested that government is well on the way to striking a deal with international creditors, following its decision to default on those payments last June.

"Progress being made by the authorities in furthering good-faith discussions with external creditors is welcome. Continuing open dialogue and sharing of information will remain important in concluding an orderly debt restructuring process," the IMF statement said.

The team will return in May to conduct the discussions for the first review under the EFF which was approved last October. 🌐



► Head of the IMF team that visited the island this month, Bert van Selm, said Barbados continues to make good progress in implementing its ambitious and comprehensive economic reform programme

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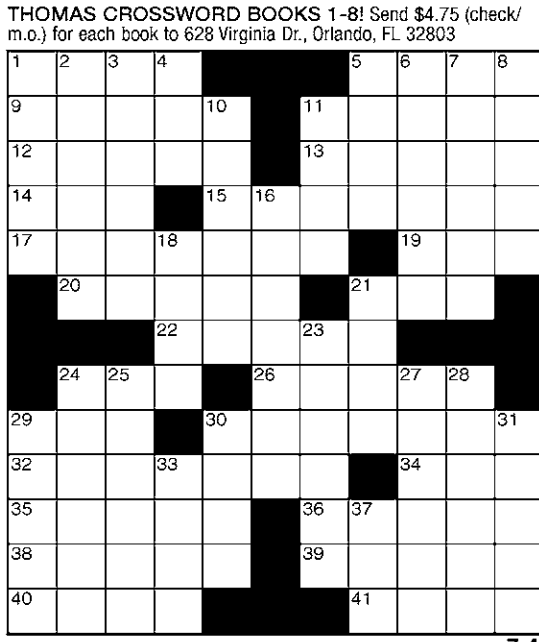
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- 27 Lusty drive
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Yesterday's answer



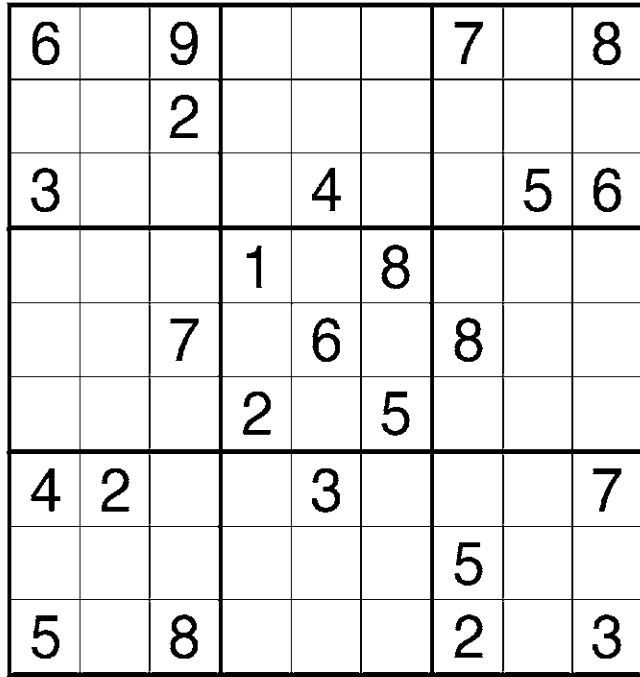
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Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Sunday.

Conceptis Sudoku

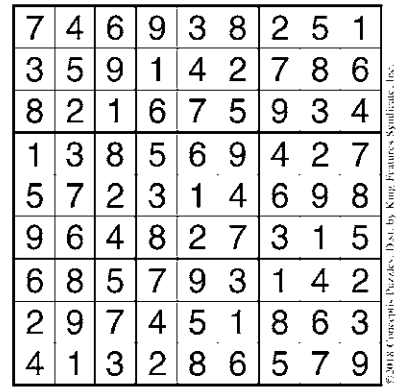
By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★★★

6/09

Answer to previous puzzle



Difficulty Level ★★★★★

Word Search



- Antiques
- Autographs
- Books
- Bottles
- China
- Coins
- Comics
- Dolls
- Figurines
- Fossils
- Gems
- Glass
- Maps
- Pewter
- Plates
- Postcards
- Posters
- Pottery
- Prints
- Rocks
- Silver
- Stamps
- Toys



Find the listed words in the diagram. They run in all directions – forward, back, up, down and diagonally.

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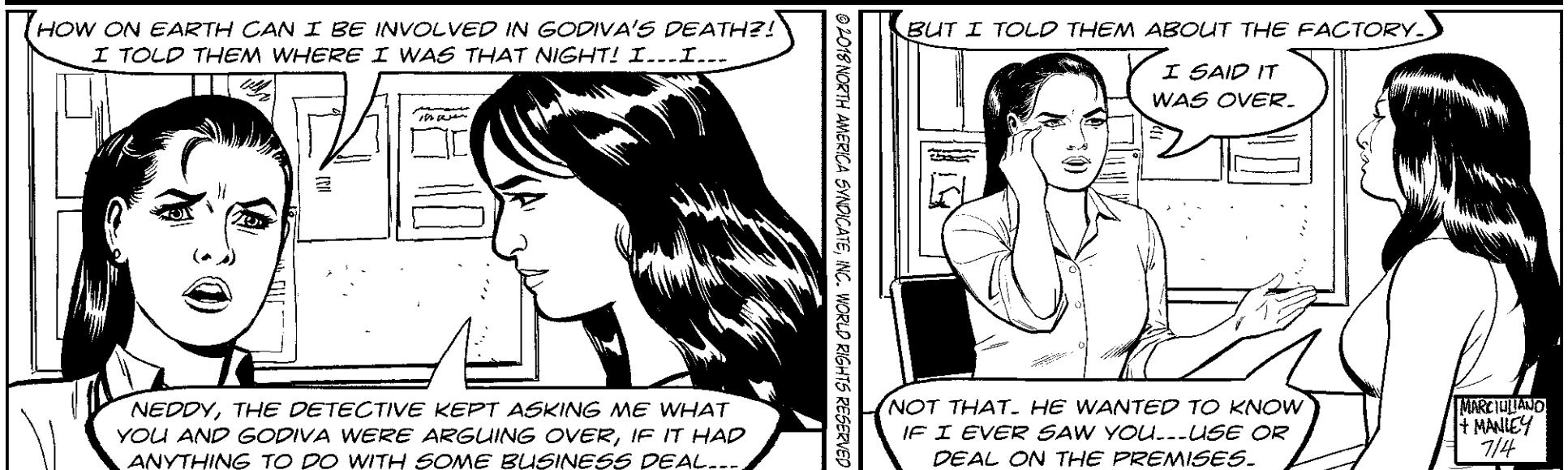
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THE AMAZING SPIDER MAN By Stan Lee



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