



THE HARMONY of the seas, the world's biggest cruise liner, in port in The Bahamas.



THE WORLD's biggest cruise ship, the Harmony of the Seas pictured during its inaugural voyage into Nassau.

# GIANT CRUISE SHIP COMES TO NASSAU



A GLIMPSE on board the Harmony of the Seas during its inaugural visit to Nassau. Photos: Shawn Hanna/Tribune Staff



OBEDIAH WILCHCOMBE, Minister of Tourism, speaking at the welcome ceremony for the Harmony of the Seas.

# CRUISE LINE URGED TO BUILD DOCK IN FREEPORT

TWO environmental organisations are calling on Carnival Cruise Lines to dry-dock plans to build a \$200m cruise port in East End, Grand Bahama, citing the area as "one of the most fragile and important ecological wonders of The Bahamas".

The National Economic Council last week gave the green light for the conclusion of a heads of agreement with Carnival Cruise Lines for the \$200m cruise project in East End. The government has said that such a port would have great economic impact and negotiations with the cruise company have been going on since the summer of 2015.

Waterkeepers Bahamas Executive Director Rasheema Ingraham said East End is a microcosm of all that makes the environment of

The Bahamas "the amazing treasure" it is. "Driving past the Casuarina Bridge and the new Jack Hayward Bridge into East End, a whole world opens up," she said. "There is nowhere else in The Bahamas quite like it, even the light is different. But it is very fragile and much of it is quite shallow or marshland. The campus of the College of The Bahamas is on marshland."



ENVIRONMENTALISTS fear a proposed \$200m Carnival Cruise Water port could wipe out mangroves and marshlands in East End, Grand Bahama.

such a port could have on the potable water source.

without harming marine life, rare owls, a blue hole, the water supply, magnificent coral reefs, marshlands and an area where dolphins still swim free and in the wild?"

"Grand Bahama sits on one of the three greatest watersheds of The Bahamas, the others being Abaco and Andros," Ms Ingraham said. "There is a reason that the storage tanks were located at East End. The water table extends for miles and if you allow salt intrusion through dredging you will be affecting the source of water for much of the northern Bahamas."

Sam Duncombe, a board member of Save The Bays and founder of reEarth, added her voice to the concerns. "East End is also the site of the Lucayan National Park," she said. "How can there even be consideration of a major cruise port in such a delicate low-lying area, with wide sand bank at low tide on one side, marsh and mangroves on the other, a small national park with historic value? It would be hard to imagine a less suitable place for a port."

Ms Ingraham and Mr Darville also said that East End beaches, including Gold Rock Beach, are the most desirable of all of Grand Bahama's 80 miles of beach and coastline and may be the only place in the Bahamas where swimmers and snorkellers can swim among free dolphins who live and play in the waters less than two miles offshore. They also cite untouched coral reefs at Lightbourne Cay. Environmentalists and animal rights advocates have also voiced fears that the dolphins could be captured and kept in a confined area for swim with the dolphins' experiences for cruise passengers to earn additional revenue for the cruise line.

She said she does not believe there is any way an environmental impact assessment could recommend going forward with the port in the proposed location. Save The Bays and Waterkeepers, as well as reEarth, also expressed concern about how an area so confined and fragile would handle the trash, packaging and garbage generated by cruise ships carrying thousands of passengers making weekly or more frequent stops.

"There is at present no infrastructure or amenities out east to support such a project," said Darville, whose organisation's petition has garnered nearly 7,000 signatures. "That whole area is also at basically sea level replenished with mangroves, flowing tidal creeks and other marine amenities, all of which will be destroyed by any such development. Why take a chance risking the loss of one of the great ecological treasures of The Bahamas when it can be moved just a matter of miles and create the same economic benefit

Carnival has made no secret of its desire to have its own private port/passenger getaway in The Bahamas, a senior executive confirming its intentions to a Bahamas Chamber of Commerce and Employers Confederation (BCCEC) gathering at Palm Cay last year. It is just about the only cruise line without its own Bahamas private facility, with rivals such as Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines already possessing their own getaways such as Coco Cay in the Berry Islands and Half Moon Cay near Cat Island.



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speaking on "the Future of Wellbeing"

**When:** NEW DATE Saturday, January 14, 2017, from 9:00 am  
**Where:** NEW VENUE Crown Ballroom, Atlantis, Paradise Island  
**Tickets:** NEW INFO If you registered for the postponed event, look out for a confirmation email and respond as instructed.

Author of over 80 books, including 22 New York Times best sellers, Deepak Chopra is the Co-Founder and Chairman of the Board of the Chopra Center for Wellbeing and Founder of The Chopra Foundation. TIME magazine has described him as "one of the top 100 heroes and icons of the century".

#DeepakChopraAMI2017



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