

# Reporter

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## GOB Establishes Minimum Wage Task Force

By Javam Flowers

The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour announced this week via a press release the appointment of a Minimum Wage Task Force to oversee the implementation of Plan Belize's five-dollar minimum wage commitment.

The task force held its inaugural meeting Wednesday, March 2, at the ministry's conference room in Belmopan.

According to the release, "Cabinet requested that the ministry develops a plan for the gradual implementation of the government's commitment to a five-dollar minimum wage."

Currently, the minimum wage stands at \$3.30 per hour, phased in over five years between 2007 and 2012, with the last increase taking effect on May 8, 2012. Ten years later, the existing minimum



Minimum Wage Task Force has representatives from key sectors, including the public and private sectors, and the unions.

wage for unskilled workers and workers who are "engaged in elementary occupations" is currently being reassessed.

The release continues adding that "the government recognizes that any increase to the

present minimum wage would have implications for various sectors. As a result, the phased minimum wage increases must be linked to productivity growth and Belize's competitiveness. Therefore, with stakeholder input,

careful consideration will be given to the impact of these increases on the various sectors of the economy in the short-, medium- and long-term."

The task force comprises seven persons representing workers,

employers, and the government. Ms. Cindy Thompson, representing the University of Belize, chairs the task force. The other members are (1) Mr. Daniel Gutierrez, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry; (2) Ms. Carlesha Francisco, National Bank of Belize; (3) Ms. Fayne Nicasio,

Ministry of Economic Development; (4) Mr. Luis Luke Martinez, National Trade Union Congress of Belize; (5) Ms. Candice Soutar, Central Bank of Belize; and (6) Ms. Anne Marie Thompson, Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government.

## Health Minister: Agric Show and Carnival to return this year

By Michelle Sutherland

In an exclusive interview with Minister of Health, Hon. Kevin Bernard on Wednesday confirmed to our newspaper, that if all goes as planned, he will be giving the green light for upcoming major events such as the Annual Easter Fair, National Agriculture and Trade Show, Lobster Fest,



Carnival Roadmarch may return this year

Pg. 3

## Belize Lift Outdoor Mask Mandate and Nightly Curfew

By Michelle Sutherland

Belizeans are no longer required to wear masks outdoors, the latest COVID-19 regulation informed this week.

The new rules,

implemented via Statutory Instrument (SI) No. 32 of 2022, came into effect on Tuesday, March 1st, 2022. The new rules removed the nightly curfew and detailed that "a person shall

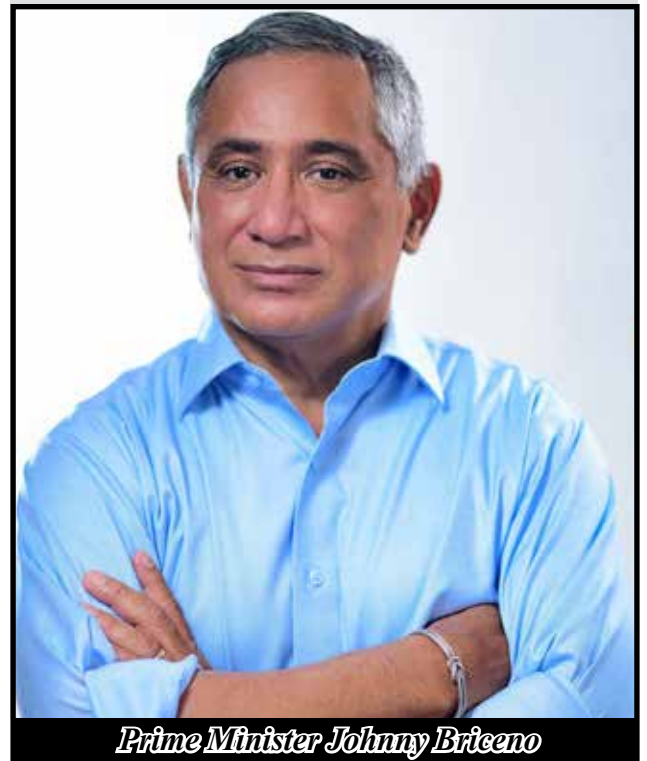


Pg. 3

INSIDE BOX

Pg. 2

## 10% salary cut reversed



Prime Minister Johnny Briceño



One man has shaken the world and defied the international rule of law by his decision to send Russian troops to invade Ukraine, an independent, democratic nation sitting on the far edge of Europe.

Ukraine gained her independence from the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. But in 2014 Russia sent her army to invade the Southern portion of Ukraine, took over the province of Crimea and confiscated the Black Sea Port of Sevastapol, depriving Ukraine of a cherished national treasure.

Now eight years after taking Crimea by force, Russia has sent a large invading army to conquer Ukraine and turn it into a vassal state.

The war has been raging for days, and the invading force has not yet been able to take the capital, Kiev, despite massive bombardments from the air, an overwhelming military presence, and missiles aimed at civilian as well as military targets.

Ukrainians have been putting up unbelievably brave resistance. But Russia has a vast reserve of men and materiel which she can hurl at Ukraine in the short term, while Ukrainians are fighting with diminishing resources. It has become harder for western allies to re-supply the freedom fighters with more weapons.

The United States has said it will not send troops, and NATO, the North American Treaty Organization, has not deployed any of its forces to Ukraine either, since Ukraine is not (yet) a member of NATO.

It seems inevitable that Ukraine will fall victim to the aggressiveness of the Russian bear sooner or later. It also seems certain that the Russian army will not be unable to hold on to its military gains in the long run.

Remember how the United States tried for 20 years to subdue the Taliban forces of Afghanistan? The US eventually gave up by withdrawing! The same thing seems likely it to happen to Russia!

By the time the law of attrition comes into play and Mr. Putin is forced to throw in the towel, the Russian economy will have collapsed. Millions of refugees will have had to be resettled, and thousands of soldiers and civilians will have died! The death toll for Russian soldiers in Ukraine has already exceeded 1,000.

After 76 years of peace since the end of World War II in 1945, there will be another cruel convulsion in the 22nd century!

Already inflation has gripped the Russian economy. Already the Russian ruble has lost more than 25 percent of its value. Already there are protests on the streets of Moscow.

There will be more losses for Russia because the democratic nations of the West are united. They will not back down.

The Russian objective of keeping NATO out of Eastern Europe has not been met, and will not be met. The war in Ukraine is shaping up to be the end of the line for this dictator.



## Willing

Dear Editor,

Some weeks ago when wifey returned from the market, she reported: there is no carrots. Needing to bake a cake she repeated her quest the following week, returning with carrots at one fifty a pound. These were local at a higher price, but LOCAL.

Who likes to pay more for the same product?... No one! But in this case I accepted a sudden rise in the price because I thought that the Ministry of Agriculture was encouraging local production - not sneaking into the market a foreign item payed for by a special permit to a friend.

At this time when all prices seem to be ascending... imagine a pound of fish fillet gouging 17 dollars... Seventeen dollars a pound! I have said to wifey: buy only whole fish - no fillet.

Just think. The Holy Spirit in Acts told Peter, when he was going to the house of a Roman gentile: don't you call anything unclean that God has created. Why then have we in Belize stopped cooking and eating things like land crabs, hicate, iguana, deer, Royal rat, frog legs, sheep, goat, black berries, sea grapes, coco plum, Mercia, beef soup, sere - Ms. Oods, what is the correct spelling? Sere or Sereh with and h?

Let us battle inflation and price gouging by returning to the love of our Belizean way of life by eating and cooking what is available to us in nature.

Recently, my taste buds were sparked by a dish of beef soup. I hadn't eaten that in God knows how long. It was really a delightful experience, and sparked a

## 10% salary cut reversed

By Michelle Sutherland

Prime Minister John Briceño, in a letter dated February 28th, 2022, and penned to the Joint Unions Negotiating Team (JUNT), has promised that in four months, he will be returning the 10% that was cut from teachers' and public servants' salaries last year.

Briceño wrote, "I am, therefore, pleased to inform that my Cabinet has agreed that in this upcoming fiscal year, the Government of Belize will fully restore the wages and salaries of our public officers and teachers. To be more specific, as of July 1st, 2022, the 10% reduction in wages and salaries will be no more. It will be restored not in stages not in increments but in full as of that date. Allowances that had been reduced will also be restored in full."

According to the prime minister, last year the government provided the International Monetary Fund with certain targets for the three-year period and which they felt was consistent with that path. Projections which the prime minister said his government has successfully managed to outperform in just its first year. While Briceño said that the IMF has noted the success, the Fund, nonetheless, stressed that Belize was not out of the woods as yet and needed to do more fiscal consolidations, among other things. The IMF additionally recommended that the Government refrain from restoring the salaries to full and instead only do a partial restoration in line with inflation.

But while those recommendations were clear, Briceño said, "We chose to undertake our own homegrown fiscal and economic recovery plan against the advice of the IMF. We respectfully disagree with the IMF on this recommendation, once again."

That, according to Briceño, is based on the fact that as the private sector and the economy continue to recover so the public officers and teachers could be relieved of carrying that burden. A burden which the Prime Minister said he and his government had agreed to ease as soon as they could while still identifying a sustainable development path for the country.



longing for fish soup and Sereh.

Some other Belizean delights and delectables are: FRUITS - craboo, Sakpa, hamans (almonds), guava, cashew, bucut, golden plum, govna plum, sweet lemons VEGGIES - kalalu, Chaya, punkin; CANDIES - cut-o-brut, wangla, tableta, goatshit, kasham, fudge; MEATS - cowfoot, heart, liver, chicharon, guts, conchs, bocotora, catfish, crana, livers, rabbit, snails.

Ms. Oods (Woods) will expand my list, hopefully.

Do the above hint as possible, or probable new family businesses? If possible, let us show forth some verbal and physical support?

The wisdom of these "Belizarian" appetizers are resurfacing as Russia is seeking to frighten and coerce a country of fifty million to accept absorption into a bigger country, not necessarily more democratic or free, or as prosperous.

I think the WORLD, especially its powerful leaders, have got to accept the TRUTH that not because they are richer and more powerful they can morally impose on me and their feelings of what is also good for you and me!

Has the experience and tragedy of Nazi Germany not taught us anything??!!

When the ICJ will have issued its verdict on the Belize - Guatemala Dispute, I pray Almighty God that His Holy Spirit will inspire all of us on both sides of our borders to realize that nationality is only a TEMPORARY arrangement, for every human being belongs to a more permanent relationship that is the destiny of all of humanity.

GOD HAS WILLED; are You and I WILLING?

Sincerely, Paul Rodriguez

Part of the agreement is that teachers and public officers will be required to revert back to their normal work week at 39.5 hours as opposed to the adjustments that were made last year as a way of compensating them for the 10% cut that they had suffered.

Briceño further noted that increments will continue to be frozen for two additional fiscal years unless the government is able to achieve an end-of-the-year primary surplus as a percentage of GDP of no less than 3.5 % before then.

Looking back at the decision to cut the salaries of public officers and teachers, Briceño reiterated that it was done for the long-term benefit of the country and that despite being advised to carry out a retrenchment exercise, he and his government chose instead to have each and every public officer hold on to their jobs but to share the same burden. A decision that did not sit well with many but one which the prime minister said was for the greater good of the country.

"The effect was that public officers and teachers made sacrifices for all of us," summarized PM Briceño in closing.

### THE REPORTER

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# Health Minister: Agric Show and Carnival to return this year

Cont'd from pg. 1

and even the Carnival Road march to proceed as normal.

When we asked the Minister about the possibility of him giving the nod to the organizers, he told The Reporter, "More than likely that will happen because that is the way Cabinet is thinking. We will be looking closely at the trend for this month and after April 1st we will be looking at opening up all the other restrictions."

In fact, the minister reminded us that all forms of events, with the exception of bars, have been opened to the public at 75% capacity. In terms of any mass gathering, Bernard indicated that they will only be given the green light if certain protocols are in place. This includes the attendance of fully vaccinated persons. Additionally, organizers must also ensure that they do not exceed the capacity and that they ensure as best as possible to have participants abide by the social distancing measures.

"The projections are that we are going through pre-Omicron levels and we will just keep going down. We may end up at some

point having no cases being reported a day. We are looking at that trend. Again we don't know what is happening, or what can happen so there is always that skepticism ... but whatever happens, we must be prepared for that," indicated the Minister.

In fact, according to Bernard, Belize as well as countries and nations around the world are holding their collective breath and hoping that Omicron might be the end of the pandemic and that it will eventually become endemic and would only require treatment. Bernard referred to the reports that were coming out of the World Health Organization, which had warned of other subvariants that have emerged and dissipated without any major cause for concern.

That along with the fact that the Medical Response team has been pleased by the daily positivity rate, and hospitalization, resulted in the team making recommendations to Cabinet to not only lift the curfew but also the outdoor mask mandate. Bernard indicated that after looking at the overall trend and projections for the next few weeks, the government decided that after two years of living under strict regulations it was time to

open back up the country and instead have the citizens exercise their own personal responsibility to get vaccinated and ensure their safety, that of their families and loved ones by whatever means necessary.

Over the next couple of weeks, the Medical Response Team will be making further recommendations. Among them is the reopening of nightclubs and entertainment spots. Those, according to the minister, will require certain regulations to be in place. He also reminded that if there is a surge in cases then the regulations could be reverted back to include mandatory mask-wearing, nightly curfews, and bans on social and sporting events. He is, therefore, advising the public to get vaccinated, practice their social distance, and wear their mask if they feel uncomfortable without it in public.

## Belize Lift Outdoor Mask Mandate and Nightly Curfew

Cont'd from pg. 1

not be required to wear a face mask or other face, nose and mouth covering if that person is ... outdoors in an open space."

This means that persons walking outside are not expected to wear mask; however, the regulations do continue to mandate that masks be worn in enclosed non-private and non-residential spaces. These spaces include government buildings or offices, statutory bodies, business offices or buildings, shops, stores, supermarkets, hardware stores, or when using any mode of public transportation (bus, plane, boat).

Additionally mask must also be worn when in attendance at any social event including, church services, weddings, funerals, social clubs, and receptions. Anyone failing to abide by the above protocols can be ticketed.

On Monday Prime Minister John Briceño, in a pre-recorded statement said, "The Cabinet has decided that the time has come to restore personal and economic freedoms while encouraging everyone to act responsibly. Effective March 1st, the curfew will be lifted. The Minister of Health will provide more details of the process by which we will lift all measures during the month of March, as we move towards normalcy on April 1st, 2022. We continue to urge Belizeans to get vaccinated and for those who have not yet been boosted, we urge you to do so."

But while the outdoor mask mandate has been relaxed and the public can now walk outdoors without worrying about wearing their mask, the regulations also reminded that abiding by social distancing is still required while masks are still being required to be used in schools.

Bars and clubs remain closed. Gymnasiums are now allowed to function at 75% of their capacity, while the restrictions on spas and sports have also been lifted.

Border entry points are now open for 24 hours, however, Belizeans traveling out of the country will no longer be required to test upon reentry into the country at any of the border stations. Foreign nationals who do not intend to stay in Belize longer than a day are not required to purchase the Belize Travel Insurance.

Vaccinated tourist do not need to test upon entry into the country; however, unvaccinated travelers are still required to test upon their arrival at the airport or any of the land borders.

The Minister of Health Hon. Kevin Bernard is also reminding the public that, if they do not feel safe without wearing their mask outdoors then they can wear it for their own personal safety.

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# NTUCB Appreciative of GOB's Move to Increase Minimum Wage

By Michelle Sutherland

The National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) has placed on record their appreciation for the appointment of the tripartite Minimum Wage Task Force that is charged with formulating a plan for the gradual implementation of the five-dollar minimum wage.

NTUCB's President Luke Martinez, who also sits on the newly appointed task force, told the Reporter that not only does the union appreciate the efforts made by the Briceño Administration to increase the wages of Belizeans, but that they are also satisfied with the way that it is being carried out by way of a tripartite means, inclusive of representatives from all the major sectors that will be affected as opposed to making it a political circus.

"We are glad that the government realizes that at some point we have to see how we can invest in our people and see how we can maintain the middle class who are the key factors in ensuring that our economy circulates. The NTUCB is all about what is going to benefit the workers in this country and we have to look at the fact that the last minimum wage increase was in 2012. Right now our minimum wage is at \$3.30 an hour and when you look at the SIB statistic about 52% of our population is living in poverty. That is just over two hundred thousand people living in poverty."

Martinez told us that the task force met on Wednesday of this week as an introductory session to discuss their terms of reference and formulate a plan for moving forward. While Martinez could not provide us with a timeframe to suggest when the groundwork will be completed, he indicated that it will encompass some "serious research" and "political will" as well as the dedication of the various stakeholders to get it done.

"Well, the process has started, and from the NTUCB's standpoint once we have started something we always want to finish. We strive on being committed and we intend to play our role in this process until the end. Hopefully, Belizeans will look at it from a nationalistic perspective and that is why I said that we note that the Government is taking a tripartite approach and not a political one. At least so far and so we are certain that it will work," Martinez explained.

Earlier this week the Government of Belize had issued a press release indicating that Cabinet had requested The Ministry of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour, and Local Government to appoint a task force that will develop a plan to increase the minimum wage from \$3.30 an hour to \$5.00. According to the release, the Briceño administration noted that after 10 years, there is a need for the reassessment of the minimum wage.

The Government said that in recognizing the implications that an increase in wages would have on the various sectors, input from them is vital to assess the short, medium, and long-term effects that it could present. They also noted that the increase would have to be linked to productivity growth and the country's competitiveness.



NTUCB President Luke Martinez says the Minimum Wage Task Force has their support.



## MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND INVESTMENT

### NEW GAMING MACHINE LICENSE MORATORIUM NOTICE

The Gaming Control Board of Belize would like to inform the public that New Applications for Gaming Machine (Establishment) Licenses for the period of April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022, to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, will only be accepted for those that will be located at the following tourism destinations: Ambergris Caye, Caye Caulker and Placencia.

A **Moratorium** will be placed on applications from all other locations until further notice. Please note that this applies only to new applicants and not renewals.

License Holders that received approval for the period of 2021/2022 may submit renewal applications.

#### **We can be contacted via:**

**Telephone:** (501) 828-6704/ 828-9046

**Email:** [belizeinvestment@invest.gov.bz](mailto:belizeinvestment@invest.gov.bz)

**Facebook:** Investment Policy & Compliance Unit

## VACANCY

A Vacancy exists for a RECEPTIONIST/SECRETARY with a law firm located in Belize City

The successful Applicant must have the following:

- Minimum of 2 years working experience with a Law Firm
- Analytical skills and ability to monitor and cope with large amounts of information
- Keen Attention to detail
- Excellent Oral and Written Communication Skills
- Proficiency in Excel, Word and basic QuickBooks

Please email curriculum vitae and references to [informationservicesbz@gmail.com](mailto:informationservicesbz@gmail.com)

Deadline for submission is **Thursday, the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2022**

# BELIZE BREWING COMPANY'S FIRST FEMALE BREWER

Belize Brewing Company (BBCo) is proud of Team Member Ms. Carina Cal, a young Belizean who has excelled in a role traditionally held by men. Carina is BBCo's first female brewer, and her story is as interesting as the job she has embraced.

Born in Punta Gorda and raised in Yo Creek, Orange Walk by a single mother, Carina knew from a young age that she wanted to work in the sciences. After completing primary school as the Valedictorian, she was awarded a scholarship to Muffles College, where she continued her focus on science. Carina's excellent grades in high school resulted in her being chosen as a recipient for a sixth-form scholarship by the Social Security Board. At the University of Belize, she double majored in biology and chemistry, completing her associate degree in 2015.

Carina joined BBCo in 2015 at the tender age of 18 as a Junior Lab Technician. Over

the next few years, she was promoted to Senior Lab Technician and then Microbiology Lab Supervisor.

Based on her outstanding work in the Lab, in 2021, Carina was offered the opportunity to train as a brewer, and she immediately accepted. With the advantage of her lab experience and after some intense training with master brewers, Carina learned the brewing process from start to end, including chemical and microbiological analysis and fermentation.

As Carina puts it, "While the job involves a lot of physical work, I have learned to work smarter, not harder, and become more efficient over time."

She is now Junior Head Brewer and responsible for BBCo's pilot brews and the Two-5 craft brews, which are growing in popularity around the country.

Carina's training continues as she explores



*Carina Cal makes history*

new beer flavours and styles and learns more about the creative process. Her goals are to complete her bachelor's degree in Applied Chemistry, which she juggles with her job and being a mother to a one-year-old. Eventually, Carina hopes to expand her knowledge and earn the title of Brew Master.

Belize Brewing Company is proud of Carina's accomplishments and continues working to create new opportunities for young Belizeans.

###

The Belize Brewing Company is a Bowen & Bowen Company. Founded in 1969, it introduced Belikin, the first Belizean beer. Family-owned for over a half-century, Belikin Beer has become a touchstone of Belizean cultural identity. Belize Brewing Company produces and/or markets a range of local and international brands, including other alcohol beverages.

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## VACANCY NOTICE

### Operations Manager

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill the following post in the Operations Department. In the Port's continued effort to promote diversity both males/females, able/ differently abled are encouraged to apply for the available post.

**Reports to: Chief Executive Officer**

**Summary of Responsibilities:** Lead the Operations Department to achieve the best possible level of service to our Customers, at the lowest possible cost, whilst ensuring zero harm. Inspire and motivate all Supervisors, Clerks and Operators and other Operations Staff to continuously improve safety standards and productivity, through the application of lean processes, complimented by the relevant application of technology. Lead change initiatives to achieve these macro-level goals. Establish and maintain excellent working relationships with all other heads of department, collaborating within the leadership team to ensure the optimal holistic contribution to the continued success of the company.

#### **Job Responsibilities:**

- Attract, develop, grow and retain the best talents and fill the leadership pipeline.
- Organize, balance and schedule workloads within the department.
- Prioritize, delegate, and set performance objective, and develop visual management systems.
- Follow-up on performance, provide quality feedback, and objectively appraise differentiated performance levels.
- Empower and inspire to achieve high levels of motivation and employee engagement.
- Ensure zero harm, improve safe working processes within the full Operational area of the facility.
- Provide timely reports for all accidents and disciplinary incidents.
- Understand Customer requirements and drive the department to achieve these on a consistent basis.
- Track and manage variable expenditure to avoid all cost waste and reduce costs to the bare minimum.
- Continuously lean, streamline, and improve processes.
- Leverage relevant technology to automate processes.
- Collaborate with the Technical department to ensure that the optimal quantity of equipment is available for deployment.
- Work closely with the Accounting department to ensure that all services are precisely and expeditiously billed to the Customers.
- Coordinate just-in-time berthing of all vessels with the Marine department.
- Maintain high levels of data quality for Operational information and reports provided to other functions.
- Represent the company towards Unions, Customers, Regulators and Authorities.
- Provide inputs into budgetary processes.
- Take ownership in ambiguous situations.

#### **Job Qualifications/Requirement:**

- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Supply Chain Management, Port Management or other related field (Master's degree would be an asset)
- 3-5 years' exemplary leadership experience of diverse teams
- Minimum 3-5 years' experience in supervising or managing logistics operations or other similar fields

**Required Skills, Knowledge and Characteristics:** To be selected applicants must possess the following important characteristics:

- Emotional intelligence
- Innovative and creative
- Complex problem-solving
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- Visionary and inspiring
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**Compensation Package:** Will be commensurate (in accordance with the Company's Salary Structure).

**To apply:** Provide updated resume, cover letter (addressed to Human Resource Manager), copy of valid social security card, valid police report, name and phone number of two (2) previous employers.

Email to:

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Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday, March 04, 2022.

**Reporter**



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# 4th CARICOM SICA SUMMIT

By Javan Flowers

Heads of State and Government of the Central American Integration System (SICA) have convened for the Fourth CARICOM SICA Summit on San Pedro, Ambergris Caye, after more than a decade, to strengthen relations in the face

of multidimensional challenges.

The Summit is expected to adopt the Joint Declaration of San Pedro, with commitments to strengthen foreign policy consultation; actively collaborate on socio-economic development matters, including tourism, trade, and investment; and strength-

en cooperation in Climate Change and public health, among other issues.

The Heads are also expected to sign a Revised CARICOM – SICA Plan of Action adopted by Foreign Ministers of the two Regions, which highlights specific areas for joint dialogue and commitment to implementation, evaluation, and follow-up.

Special Guest Antonio Guterres, United Nations Secretary-General, joined the Summit virtually due to implications of the Ukraine-Russia conflict and is expected to engage the Heads on several matters, including COVID-19 pandemic

response and recovery climate change, financing for development, and the situation in Haiti.

CARICOM Chairman Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, in his opening statements, noted, “The last time the heads of the two subregions met [in El Salvador] was more than a decade ago. Then heads made a solid commitment to strengthen cooperation and engagement areas of mutual interest that were integral to our development.”

He continues by adding that “the fact is our efforts have been less than satisfactory considering the com-

mon plight we face and the many opportunities for collaboration which we missed. This must now change.”

The CARICOM Chairman further highlighted that due to the significant change that has tak-

en place regionally and globally over more than a decade, the rekindled cooperation of members of SICA and CARICOM “must be strategic. It must deliver more for the people of our shared neighborhoods.”

## Belizean mutton – expanding production

By William Ysaguirre



Belizean sheep farmers are learning how to improve production and quality of the mutton they produce through a US\$3 million technical support project, which the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise is implementing over the next two years.

Some 15 sheep and goat farmers of the Corozal district received hands-on training with demonstrations in feeding management, sheep barn management, breed demonstration, records keeping and preparing cuts of mutton at a workshop at Benito Vasquez’s farm in Paraiso Village, Corozal District on Wednesday, March 2.

Extension officers of the “Breeding Sheep and Goat Production and Guidance System Enhancement Project” (Sheep Project Phase II) joined Mr. Vasquez in training the other farmers and other interested parties from the district about in sheep management. The project began with the signing of a technical cooperation agreement in March 2020.

Project Specialist Eason Huang assured the farmers that the project will continue supporting Belizean the farmers through theoretical and practical training and educational outreach. The aim is to help the farmers improve the quality of their sheep and goat flocks. A market study is also being conducted, and the value chain is being analyzed to promote the sales of sheep and goat products to penetrate the Belize market. The project is also strengthening the traceability system for sheep and goats, to improve value chain efficiencies.

Taiwan’s International Cooperation in Development Fund (ICDF) technical mission at Central Farm has been supporting and seeking to enhance Belizean sheep and goat production since 2016, when two technicians were sent to train in Taiwan. The mission gifted a sheep barn at Central Farm to the Ministry of Agriculture in 2018, and has regularly imported sheep and goats of improved breeding stock to add to the Ministry’s flock.

Belize produced USD\$137,000 of mutton meat in 2019 and slaughtered 1,363 head in 2020, from a flock of 16,679 head, according to statistics reported by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Beyond supplying the Belize market, farmers have the potential to export to the Caricom Single Market Economy (CSME), which is a huge market. The FAO reports that Trinidad and Tobago produced US\$3.3 million value of mutton in 2020, and Jamaica – US\$1.74 million.



Prime Minister John Briceño at Summit



### REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Institution: *Belize Water Services Limited*

Country: *Belize*

Project: *Independence to Seine Bight Transmission line*

Sector: *Water*

Abstract: *The general objective of this publication is to engage eligible construction companies to install a new potable water transmission pipeline from Independence Village to Seine Bight Village (Stann Creek District) as per design.*

Project Number: *225511171739/ BWS-55-1618*

Deadline: *March 14, 2022*

The construction services (“the Services”) include, but are not limited to, installation and commissioning of 3 miles of 10” PVC transmission line in the mainland and 3 miles of 10” HDPE transmission line through the lagoon:

- Identification of established Benchmarks and Setting out of new works;
- Excavation of trenches along the route, placement and compaction of embedment, backfill, and road base, and reinstatement of works
- Installation of pipeline and various assemblies, concrete anchors, and other components and
- Commissioning, including final connections, pressure (hydrostatic) testing, flushing, and disinfecting.

*Belize Water Services Limited* now invites eligible construction companies (“Bidders”) to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Companies should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

Companies must qualify on two major work categories:

- Civil and ancillary works** including, but not limited to, construction and refurbishment of buildings, construction and refurbishment of roads and streets, major and minor roads chip and seal works, earthworks, fencing, concrete works, facility maintenance, retaining walls, drainage, security huts, shelters and canopies, railings, bins, signage, plastering, painting, etc.
- Water Supply Systems** including new and renewals of transmission, distribution mains and service connections; installation of pump stations; installation of headworks; water treatment plant works (including mechanical/electrical and civil); and construction and/or restoration of reservoirs.

Financial category of the project:

- Large contract** estimated more than \$1,000,000.

Financial resources of the company shall be BZ\$300,000 monthly.

Shortlisting of contractors will be based on the [Application pack – Expression of Interest for Independence to Seine Bight Transmission Line Tendering process](#) and is open to all eligible contractors as defined in the document.

*The short list shall comprise of minimum of three (3) and maximum of eight (8) companies.*

Companies may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.

*Interested parties should contact the Engineering procurement representative, via email to obtain Application Package and other information.*

Expressions of interest and application package must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by e-mail) by **March 14, 2022**, no later than 3:00 P.M.

*Belize Water Services Limited*  
Attn: *Engineering procurement*  
7 *Central American Boulevard*  
*Belize City, Belize, C.A.*  
Tel: *+(501) 222-4757, Ext. 1713*  
E-mail: [engineeringprocurement@bws.com.bz](mailto:engineeringprocurement@bws.com.bz)

# Civil Societies get Sustainable Energy Grants

By William Ysaguirre

Two civil societies, the Humana People to People-Belize and Ya'axché Conservation Trust have received grant funding from the Energy Unit in the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics and e-Governance and the European Union (EU) to develop projects as part of the Belize Sustainable Energy Roadmap. Both organizations launched their two-year projects at Kiki Witz Resort outside Belmopan on Tuesday, February 22.

"The EU considers access to sustainable energy as fundamental and the EU is striving hard to fulfill this objective, it's high on the agenda. It is a fundamental right, it also about preserving a



(L-r) Christina Garcia, CEO Valentino Shal, Marianne Van Steen, Williams Parchue

path," said EU ambassador H. E. Marianne Van Steen, and she was

pleased to see the beginning of the process. The EU is striving for equal

access to energy and is working with both governments and civil

societies to achieve this goal. This is most critical in the most remote communities which are off the grid. It's not just about access but also capacity building to ensure sustainability so the people can maintain the energy systems they have received, she said.

Ya'axché has begun a project entitled "Reliable and Sustainable Solar Energy Access for the Indigenous Communities of Golden Stream and San Jose, Toledo District, Belize", which aims improve access to education and opportunities for better livelihoods, executive director Christina Garcia explained. The project will install two solar panel projects, one to serve the 250 residents of Golden Stream Village, and another at the San Jose Community Center, serving the 800 inhabitants of that village. These will provide renewable and reliable access to solar-based energy, which will also minimize the environmental impacts of local communities within Belize's Maya Golden Landscape (MGL) in southern Belize. The new access to electricity and internet access will also facilitate women's groups to promote their small handicraft businesses online, and for the village to hold virtual community meetings in the evenings.

Humana has also begun its project named "Strengthening rural community Organization and Livelihood to Advance Resilience in Southern Belize – SOLAR Southern Belize". The project will provide

and install of solar energy units for homes, community buildings, and schools in the villages of Mabilha Otoxha and San Lucas in the Toledo District. The aim is to improve public awareness so that the women of these communities may start up their own small businesses from this increased access to renewable energy, said Humana's proposal writer Ishelly Williams – Parchue, who is also responsible for public relations. She noted that the project will also help achieve several UN sustainable development goals.

The Energy Unit within the Ministry of Rural Transformation Community Development, Labor and Local Government will provide technical support for two projects, said Chief Executive Officer Valentino Shal. The "LAIT UP BELIZE!" project, funded by the EU, will also offer technical assistance.

The Ya'axché Conservation Trust was established in 1998 with a vision to promote human development in harmony between nature in the Maya Golden Landscape. Humana People to People Belize has been working since 2007 to empower individuals, families, and communities to reduce poverty and vulnerability through local actions and capacity building. They have focused on grassroots community development projects in social entrepreneurship, sustainable agriculture and environment, and disaster risk reduction and management.

**PUBLIC AUCTION SALE: SIGNATURE PROPERTY**  
*Pepperland, Mile 60, Unitedville, Cayo District*

BY ORDER of the Mortgagees, Messrs. Belize Social Security, Licensed Auctioneers Kevin A. Castillo and Christiana R. Castillo are selling ONLINE via [belizepropertyauctions.com](http://belizepropertyauctions.com) the below described property. Sale currently running and will expire on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 1:30 pm:

REGISTRATION SECTION	BLOCK	PARCEL
Society Hall	24	3561

(Being a VERY ATTRACTIVE AND UNIQUE residence, farm, leisure development: **Main Residence** - timber & zinc building with premium finishes on the interior 28 ft. x 65 ft. + extension 22 ft. x 10 ft. = 2 bedrooms + 2 bathrooms + living room + dining room + kitchen + gym [2,040 sq. ft.]; at entrance, **Concrete Building** 27 ft. x 54 ft. = apartment + bathroom + food preparation area + workshop/utility/garage [1,458 sq. ft.]; **Warehouse Building** 30 ft. x 30 ft. divided in two [900 sq. ft.]; **Semi Enclosed Building** 15 ft. x 44 ft. = entertainment area + large BBQ Pit; **Open Thatch House (Palapa)** 25 ft. diameter + perimeter concrete bench [490 sq. ft.]; **BBQ Shed** 10 ft. x 14 ft. = built in pit + bathroom [140 sq. ft.]; **Kennel**; Adjacent to residence **Two Car Garage** 20 ft. x 26 ft. all encompassing 2 acres. The main house situate beside a hill cut and dressed with stone walls + hilltop leveled with concrete slab 15 ft. x 80 ft.; An open space behind the main house has a large fire place with chimney stack + surrounding benches; All buildings are interconnected with concrete walkways beside extensive landscaping works; All roads on this property were improved with stone chippings or gravel providing all weather access; 1 acre developed as pasture and remaining portion developed as a farm with bearing fruit trees (teak, mango, citrus, breadfruit) together with adequate swim hole and road works to three (3) most beautiful hilltops with scenic views of the surrounding area. The entire 15.384 acres of land is fenced mostly with chain link. This very beautiful property situates near Mile 60 on the George Price Highway, Mount Hope, Unitedville, Cayo District, the freehold property of Mr. Howard Oldham (deceased) and Mrs. Wilana Oldham.)

**SITE VISITS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**  
**"FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION & PHOTOGRAPHS PLEASE VISIT WEBSITE"**

**TERMS: STRICTLY CASH**  
**KEVIN A. CASTILLO**  
**TELEPHONE 223-4488**  
**Website: [belizepropertyauctions.com](http://belizepropertyauctions.com)**  
**E-mail: [kevinacas@yahoo.com](mailto:kevinacas@yahoo.com)**  
**Facebook: Belize Auctions**

# Attorney and UDP Stalwart, Herbert Panton, Dies at 50

By Michelle Sutherland

The United Democratic Party (UDP) has suffered yet another major loss, this time it being the sudden death of party stalwart, Herbert Panton, 50, who died just after mid-day on Wednesday, March 2nd, 2022.

Panton, who is the husband of UDP Area Representative Hon. Tracy Taegar Panton, had not been feeling well for some time, but, his condition took an even worse turn on Tuesday, at which time he had to be hospitalized. While it is still unconfirmed, we have been told by sources close to the family that Panton died from a heart attack.

Following the news that sent ripples of shockwaves across the country, Panton's wife Tracy took to social media to confirm his passing and wrote, "My grief is palpable. The sense of loss I feel is indescribable. The pain is unimaginable. What I know for sure is that you are at perfect peace dancing to the sweet sound of music. Free. Happy. Keep close watch over us. There was no greater love than the one we had the privilege of sharing here on earth. I Miss You."

Reminiscing on his life, Tracy referred to her husband as her best friend. He was someone that lived



Hon. Tracy Panton and Herbert Panton

life on his own terms, with no apologies, but yet one of the kindest most loving human beings, pragmatic, and honest in all his ways. His presence, according to Tracy, lit up the room as he was the life of the party, with a demeanor that commanded both attention and respect.

"He and I had big dreams together. We would fight for the things we believed in. We would stand up for the principles and values we shared. We would be the voice for the voiceless: He with his law practice; me through my bid for political leadership. I know he was extremely proud of me as I was of him. Hands down, he was my biggest fan, my most ardent supporter."

But while Panton was one of his wife's biggest supporters, he was also a bonified UDP, serving

at one point as the party's assistant general secretary and editor of the party's newspaper.

On Wednesday the UDP's party Chairman Michael Peyrefitte told the

media that he was still in shock over the sudden loss and said that Panton's death was a major blow to the party.

"He was always one of those people who would be the first to put us right, one of the first persons to tell us what we were doing well, what we were doing wrong, and he was a person you would listen to, a person

whose opinion mattered. And so as an overall supporter of the party and an official of the party, his contributions are immeasurable and today we just miss him"

The press also asked Peyrefitte whether Panton's death will affect the upcoming party convention slated for the ending of March since his widowed wife is one of the two

candidates vying for the post. Peyrefitte, however, said that the convention is not of any significance right now since the entire party, including Panton's wife, is grieving over the devastating loss.

Herbert Panton served as an attorney and a senior magistrate. He leaves behind to grieve his wife and two daughters.

**RF&G LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.**

Date: February 24, 2022

Wayne Lambey of #171 Chan Chich Street, Belize City Belize District, Belize C.A. having made written declaration that Policy END2500108 under RF&G Life Insurance Company Ltd has been lost and having made request to the Company for a duplicate of the Policy, notice is hereby given that unless objection is raised within one month of the date herein, the requested duplicate policy will be issued.

# NOTICE

## NEW ACCOUNT INFORMATION

Sagicor wishes to inform our valued clients of our new account information following the notification from the Central Bank of Belize that the Belize Bank Corporation Limited will now operate as Belize Bank Limited.

As a result, our account number for online banking has changed. You are advised to take note of these changes and update as soon as possible in order to minimize any disruption.

- ACCOUNT NAME: Sagicor Life Inc.
- BANK NAME: Belize Bank Limited, Matalon Business Center, Coney Drive, Belize City
- ACCOUNT NUMBER: 141686010120026

Queries can be directed to our Contact Center at 501-223-3147/3157 between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. daily.

We apologise for any inconvenience caused as we make the transition.



**Keep Calm and Read**

**The Reporter**



# Ruta Maya Returns This Weekend

By Michelle Sutherland

In just a couple more hours, the Banks of the Macal River in San Ignacio Town will be booming with excitement as paddlers, spectators, and sponsors all converge at the river to celebrate and witness the return of the annual La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge for the first time since the pandemic struck two years ago.

With the daily positivity rate inching downward for the past couple of weeks, the Ministry of Health gave the green light for the event to proceed, despite it being known to attract hundreds of spectators during its 180-mile journey

across the country over a four-day period. That, however, was made with the agreement that organizers of the race would ensure that spectators would abide by the Ministry of Health's protocols such as mask-wearing, social distancing, and sanitizing as best as possible.

Last week, while we were told that one of those agreements was that only vaccinated paddlers would be allowed to participate in the race, Roberto Harrison Vice Chairman of the Ruta Maya planning committee told us that that specific requirement has since been removed since it was serving as more of a deterrent for paddlers



*The La Ruta Maya is 180-mile race that has been known to attract hundreds of spectators*

who were interested in participating in the event.

Harrison indicated, "We are all excited. This race has attracted

a lot of people over the years. We are hoping that by Thursday we would have at least registered 50 teams in the eight different categories. I think that was what held us back a little was one of the regulations, based on the Ministry of Health protocols that only vaccinated paddlers would be allowed to register. They would have needed to get that done at least two weeks prior to the race but that was lifted last week and now all that is required is a negative Covid test 24 hours before the race. That is going to be required upon registration on Thursday at the Macal River."

Julia Carillo, who is also an organizer of the race, told us last Friday that they have only had 22 teams registering for the race so far. Carillo, however, indicated that late registration will be opened on Thursday at the paddlers meeting in San Ignacio Cayo, at which point the bulk of the registration is expected to come in.

"We would normally have more than that by this time but the vaccination protocols delayed the registration since several of the paddlers are not vaccinated. We received the official approval late due to the changes with Ministers and then the technical team had to advise the new ministry. Normally, we start planning for Ruta Maya six months before as do paddlers; especially those who have not established

paddlers and who need funding. This is an expensive race to carry out and it is expensive for paddlers as well but it is the thrill and experience that causes paddlers to do it," said Carillo.

While both organizers agreed that the pandemic has had some effect on the race they say that they expect next year's race to be bigger and better. Harrison said that every year the committee lobbies with various businesses across the country in an effort to secure station prizes for the various categories. That he said is a challenge, even more so for this year where businesses are still feeling the effects of the pandemic.

"Again, we thank the business community and the participants who have sacrificed themselves over time to be part of this event that brings a lot of people together for the enjoyment side of it and otherwise you know," reiterated Harrison.

This year the race will be making a stop at Hendersons Bank in Burrell Boom Village before moving on to Belize City on Monday. The race first started in 1998 as a way of promoting a new brand of water by the Harrison family. It has now blossomed into showcasing the environment and history of the Belize River. The four-day event is held in commemoration of Baron Bliss Day and will be held this year from March 4-7th, 2022.



## REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

Institution: *Belize Water Services Limited*

Country: *Belize*

Project: *Seine Bight 500,000 US gallon Water Reservoir and site development*

Sector: *Plant*

Abstract: *The general objective of this publication is to engage eligible construction companies to build a two chamber 500,000 gallon reinforced concrete reservoir in the Seine Bight Village (Stann Creek District) as per design.*

Project Number: *285511191974/ BW-55-1858*

Deadline: *March 15, 2022*

The construction services ("the Services") include, but are not limited to, construction of a 76ft x 76ft above ground reinforced concrete potable water reservoir:

- supply all construction materials and construct and commission new reinforced concrete ground water reservoir (500,000 US-gallon capacity), including installation of all pipework and fixtures and
- Construct Chemical, Dosing, and Pump rooms above reservoir including Plumbing and Electrical, Site fill, internal road, parking, site lights, drainage and perimeter fencing.

*Belize Water Services Limited* now invites eligible construction companies ("Bidders") to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested Companies should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services.

Companies must qualify on three (3) major work categories:

- **Civil and ancillary works** including, but not limited to, construction and refurbishment of buildings, construction and refurbishment of roads and streets, major and minor roads chip and seal works, earthworks, fencing, concrete works, facility maintenance, retaining walls, drainage, security huts, shelters and canopies, railings, bins, signage, plastering, painting, etc.
- **Water Supply Systems** including new and renewals of transmission, distribution mains and service connections; installation of pump stations; installation of headworks; water treatment plant works (including mechanical/electrical and civil); and construction and/or restoration of reservoirs.
- **Commercial mechanical and electrical** works including electrical and mechanical installation for buildings and compounds

Financial category of the project:

- **Large** contract estimated more than \$1,000,000.

Financial resources of the company shall be BZ\$200,000 monthly.

Shortlisting of contractors will be based on the [Application pack – Expression of Interest for Seine Bight 500,000 US gallon Water Reservoir and site Development Tendering process](#) and is open to all eligible contractors as defined in the document.

*The short list shall comprise of minimum of three (3) and maximum of eight (8) companies.*

Companies may associate with other firms in the form of a joint venture or a sub-consultancy to enhance their qualifications.


*Interested parties should contact the Engineering procurement representative, via email to obtain Application Package and other information.*

Expressions of interest and application package must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by e-mail) by **March 15, 2022**, no later than 3:00 P.M.

*Belize Water Services Limited  
Attn: Engineering Procurement  
7 Central American Boulevard  
Belize City, Belize, C.A.*

*Tel: +(501) 222-4757, Ext. 1713*

*E-mail: [engineeringprocurement@bws.com.bz](mailto:engineeringprocurement@bws.com.bz)*



**Atlantic Bank**  
wishes everyone a safe & happy

# National Heroes & Benefactors Day

Please be advised that all Atlantic Bank branches and drive thrus will be closed for business on Saturday, March 5, 2022 and reopen on Tuesday, March 8, 2022.

For your shopping convenience, use your Atlantic Bank Visa Debit Card or Visa/Mastercard Credit Cards.

For quick cash, use any of our 22 ATMs located countrywide.

[www.atlabank.com](http://www.atlabank.com)

## Weh Wi Ga Fi Seh

Kip sayf fahn di vairos!  
Kip op yu helt.

### Maach Een Moa Wod Link tu Afrika

Laas week, az paat a Blak Hishchri Mont, wi mi shyaa sohn Kriol wod weh kohn fahn sohn Afrikan langwij. Wi ga dehnya eena di Kriol-English dikshineri. Wen Ah mi tel sohn pipl Ah mi wahn du dis, dehn mi soh laik di aidyaa dat wi disaid seh fi shyaa moa dis week ahn neks week tu! Soh, si sohn moa ya.:

Kriol Wod	English Meenin	Afrikan Langwij fi di Wod
buru	a Kriol music style	Yoruba
dukunu	a food made with corn	Twi
senseh fowl	a type of chicken	Twi
shekreh	shaky, unstable	Kikoongo

**buru** *n.* Kriol style of music and dance, also known as ‘brokdong’. **Di buru da wahn kain a Kriol myoozik stail laik weh Leela Vernan sing.** The buru is a style of Kriol music like that which Leela Vernon sings. *See: brokdong.* [*<Afr: Yoruba ‘buru’ wicked*]



**dukunu** *n.* ground green corn boiled in a corn leaf. **Yu ku smel di kaan eena di dukunu.** You can smell the corn in the dukunu. [*<Afr. Twi: ‘o-dokono’ boiled cornbread*]

**senseh fowl** *n.* a type of chicken that has its feathers curled backwards. **Da how fi yoo hyaa luk fegi laik senseh fowl?** Why does your hair look tousled like a chicken whose feathers have been ruffled? [*<Afr: Twi ‘asense’ hen without a tail*]

**shekreh** *adj.* shaky, unstable, wobbly. **Noh sidong pahn da chyaa kaa ih shekreh.** Don’t sit on that chair because it’s shaky. *See: krenki.* [*<Afr. Kikoongo ‘shakal’ shabby*]

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Silvaana Udz, Ed.D. da fahn Bileez. If yu waahn tel shee bowt sohnting speshal fu put eena dis Kriol aatiki, eemayl: [sudz142@gmail.com](mailto:sudz142@gmail.com) Vizit: [www.nationalkriolcouncil.org](http://www.nationalkriolcouncil.org)

## Request for Bids (RFB)

### Belize

#### Lot 2D - Raising of the existing pavement on the Western Approach of the Roaring Creek Bridge – GPHW

#### Loan # 4616/OC-BL

#### RFB No. 1 of 2022

- The Government of Belize has received a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank toward the cost of Additional Financing for the George Price Highway Rehabilitation Project and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payments under the Contract for Construction of Lot 2D - Raising of the existing pavement on the Western Approach of the Roaring Creek Bridge – GPHW.
- The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, Government of Belize now invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for the Construction of Lot 2D - Raising of the existing pavement on the Western Approach of the Roaring Creek Bridge – GPHW the works are scarification of existing pavement, demolition of sidewalk, kerbs and concrete plinths, raising of U drains, sidewalks and retaining walls, lifting of road base, construction of reinforced concrete pavement, relocation of existing road signs and reinstallation of guard rails and pedestrian railings.
- The RFB will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedures specified in the Inter-American Development Bank’s *Policies for the Procurement of Goods and Works financed by the Inter-American Development Bank GN-2349-15* approved by the Board of Executive Directors of the Bank on 2nd of July 2019 and effective 1st of January 2020 and is open to all bidders from Eligible Source Countries as defined in the bidding document.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from Program Management Unit for the Additional Financing for the George Price Highway Rehabilitation Project [pmupcmow@gmail.com](mailto:pmupcmow@gmail.com) AND [mow.project4426@gmail.com](mailto:mow.project4426@gmail.com) and inspect the bidding document at the address given below First Floor, Project Execution Unit Building, Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, #1 Power Lane, Belmopan, Cayo District during working hours of Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (Belize time).
- Qualifications requirements include:**
  - Copies of original documents defining the constitution or incorporation, and principal place of business of the Bidder; certificate of Good Standing from the Belize Social Security Board, Belize Tax Services and Company’s Registry, written power of attorney of the signatory of the Bid to commit the Bidder, and historical contract non-performance.
  - Total monetary value of construction works performed for EACH of the last three years shall be BZ \$200,000 (cumulative BZ \$600,000).
  - Experience in works of a similar nature and size for each of the last five years, and details of works underway or contractually committed; and clients who may be contacted for further information on those contracts.
  - Listing of major construction equipment proposed to carry out the contract. Bidders must specify the conditions, numbers, type and availability, and ownership of the required equipment.
  - Qualifications and experience of key site management and technical personnel proposed for the Contract.

Position	Minimum Qualifications and Experience
Project Manager/Site Engineer	B. Sc. Civil Engineering, Hydraulic Engineering, or related field - Five years’ minimum experience in Project Management of Construction Works. - 3 years’ minimum experience in providing technical and civil engineering services for programs which include but are not limited to construction of reinforced concrete pavements, double coat chip & seal pavements and/or construction of retaining walls including guard rails. - Registered Engineer with the Association of Professional Engineers in Belize
Survey Technician	Associate degree in Building Construction, Civil Engineering, or related field - Five years’ minimum experience in surveying and civil engineering works
Environmental Health and Safety Officer	Associate degree in Environmental Science or related field - Three years’ minimum experience in works of a similar nature related to Environmental, Health and Safety compliance
Foreman	Associate degree in Building Construction, Civil Engineering or related field - Three years’ minimum experience in site supervision of reinforced concrete pavements, double coat chip & seal pavements and/or construction of retaining walls including guard rails.

- Independently audited financial statements for the last three years (2018 - 2020);
- Evidence of working capital for this Contract (access to line(s) of credit and availability of other financial resources): BZ \$200,000 (of which BZ \$75,000 must be in cash from a financial institution)
- Authorization to seek references from the Bidder’s Bankers;
- Information regarding any litigation, current or during the last three years;
- Proposals for subcontracting components of the work amounting to more than twenty percent of the contract price. A margin of preference for national contractors/JVCAs shall not be applied.
- And any other documents or information as stipulated in the Bidding Documents

- A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be requested by interested bidders on the submission of a written Application to the address below.
- Bids must be delivered to the address below at or before 10:00 am (local Belize time) on April 5th, 2022. Electronic bidding shall not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened physically in the presence of the bidders’ representatives who choose to attend in person or on-line at the address below at 10:30 am (local Belize time) on April 5th, 2022.
- All bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Security of forty thousand Belize dollars (BZ \$40,000.00).
- The address referred to above is:

Attention:

**Mr. Rolando Chan**  
Project Manager  
Program Management Unit  
1st Floor, Project Execution Unit Building  
Power Lane, Belmopan  
Cayo District, BELIZE  
Tel: 501-822-1942  
Email: [pmupcmow@gmail.com](mailto:pmupcmow@gmail.com) AND  
cc: [mow.project4426@gmail.com](mailto:mow.project4426@gmail.com)

# Met Service receives automatic weather station

By Javan Flowers

The Belize National Meteorological Service (Met Service) has received an automatic weather station this week through the Enhancing Climate Change Resilience CARIFORUM Countries program.

The donation was funded by the European Development Fund, and its implementation will be facilitated by the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre (CCCCC) under the Intra-ACP Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Programme. The project's primary objective is to improve preparedness and resilience to climate-related disasters.

Speaking at the

handing over ceremony was Executive Director of the CCCCC Dr. Colin Young, who praised the donation for the crucial information it will allow the Met Service to provide, "[the weather station] collects several parameters like the wind speed, solar radiation, temperature, rainfall and allows that data to be sent out automatically to the national Met Service who then can use that in their forecasting." He further explained that because the data would be transmitted in "real-time," it could become paramount for NEMO in planning and advising people of impending storms.

H.E. Marianne Van Steen, EU Ambassador

for Belize, further noted that the overall objective is to ensure that Caribbean countries strengthen their resiliency to climate change-related disasters by equipping themselves with these weather stations, adding that "we are not just handing it over and cutting a ribbon, but we're providing capacity building for the people who are going to work with them."

Also speaking at the ceremony, Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management Hon. Orlando Habet reflected similar sentiments to those of Belize's EU Ambassador "[the weather station] will



Dr. Colin Young, H.E. Marianne Van Steen, and Min. Orlando Habet

help us to build those adaptive capacities so that we can ameliorate the effects of climate change, further building resiliency to adapt to the effects of climate change."

## U.S. donates BZ\$870,000 school building in rural Belize

By Javan Flowers

The donation ceremony for a newly constructed building at the San Pedro Government School, funded by the United States Government through U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM), took place this week.

The donation, valued at US\$435,000 (BZ\$870,000), as detailed by the Embassy's release, "Will serve students and staff from the San Pedro village and surrounding communities."

The three-classroom building comes with a four-stall restroom, an elevated water tank, and a sidewalk connecting the facility to existing structures. According to the release, "The project originated under the Beyond the Horizon 2020 initiative, a USSOUTHCOM humanitarian and civic assistance program comprising the construction of two educational facilities in the Corozal District as well as medical campaigns."

The handing-over ceremony saw representation from the U.S. Embassy's Public Affairs Officer Adam Benz and Security Cooperation Officer Major Jason Booth. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MoECST) saw representation from Chief Executive Officer Dian Castillo-Maheia and Chief Education Officer Yolanda Gongora.

"The United States is a proud supporter of Belize's efforts to get students back to face-to-face learning, whether through the donation of hundreds of thousands of Pfizer vaccines or through this kind of important construction initiative that reunites teachers with their students in a modern learning environment," emphasized Public Affairs Officer Adam Benz. "This donation from the American people is an investment in the future of Belize's youth. Moreover, it reflects the United States commitment to democracy, diversity, and equity, as we stand with Belize to help improve the quality of children's education in rural communities."

CEO Dian Castillo-Maheia said, "We are grateful for the kindness and the generosity of the American people. Their contribution will positively impact the children of this community for many years."

The release ends by adding that an additional U.S.-funded project is in progress at the San Antonio Government School in Corozal. The facility is expected to be completed in April of this year.



**CAREER OPPORTUNITY**



**Belize Sugar Industries Ltd.**  
Invites qualified and self-motivated individuals to submit applications for the post of:  
**Human Resources Representative**  
at Tower Hill, Orange Walk

The responsibility of the **Human Resources Representative** is to manage the day-to-day operations of the Human Resource office and assist with the administration of the human resources policies, procedures and programs.

**Qualifications and Experience:**

- Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration with at least 5 years experience in management or Human Resources field.
- Union Relations experience

**Skills and Competencies:**

*Self-motivated	*Ability to work well under pressure and meet deadlines
*Team oriented/ willing to learn	*Excellent planning and organizing skills
*Computer literate (Microsoft Suit)	*Ability to adapt well to changes in work environment
*Excellent analytical and interpersonal skills	*Excellent verbal and written communication skills

**Roles and Responsibilities:**

- Assists with the development and administration of programs, procedures, and guidelines to help align the workforce with the strategic goals of the Company
- Assist with developing department goals, objectives, and systems
- Assist with recruitment, interviews, testing, and selection of employees to fill vacant positions
- Plans and conducts new employee orientation to foster positive attitude towards Company goals
- Keeps records of benefits plans participation such as insurance and pension plan, personnel transactions such as hires, promotions, transfers, performance reviews, terminations, and employee statistics for government reporting

**Letter of application accompanied by a Résumé, Police Record, recent transcript and two letters of reference should be submitted to:**

Human Resources Manager  
P.O. Box 29, Tower Hill, Orange Walk  
Or email  
HR.Belize@asr-group.com



**DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATION FORM AND ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS IS MARCH 16, 2022**

# Theme for Women's Month: "Break the Bias"

By Javan Flowers

"The theme for this year's women's month is 'break the bias.' This theme is inclusive and significant in our efforts to empower women and girls and in working towards achieving gender equality," announced Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia, in a virtual address, to commemorate the beginning of Women's month.

March is annually observed as International Women's month. Belizean women are honored and celebrated in our country. As Garcia highlighted, "we use this time to reflect on progress made to galvanize support for issues that adversely affect women. To call for change and to celebrate acts of courage and determination by ordinary women who have played notable roles in the history and edification of our communities and of our beloved Belize."

She continues by praising recent parliament support "I am proud of the fact that in February 2022, members of the



Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia

House of Representatives and the Senate gave their unanimous support to the motion against domestic violence." Adding that "This motion is of great significance because it is the first time that a call was made by national leaders for 'national leaders' to take a stance of zero tolerance to domestic violence."

Women are powerful agents of change, and the far-reaching benefits of diversity and gender parity in leadership and decision making are increasingly recognized in all spheres; yet, as Garcia emphasized, "women continue to be vastly underrepresented in decision making in politics and business. This being especially true in rural

and indigenous communities."

In her closing remarks, the Minister further explained that the government is "committed to changing the narrative on women in leadership ... to empower the women of Belize through several grant and loan programs."

These programs were curtailed, especially for women in "micro small and medium enterprises." Moreover, there has also been a movement to encourage women and girls to engage in STEAM, a Science Technology Engineering Arts and Mathematics scholarship program, coupled with the government's prioritization of housing and land ownership for women and single mothers.

# Report: Pfizer's pediatric vaccine only 12% effective

By Javan Flowers

International reports from The New York State Department of Health (NYSDH) found that Pfizer's pediatric vaccine's efficacy for children aged 5 – 11 plummeted from 68% to 12% in just under one month.

The report, compiled by researchers working for the NYSDH from December 13, 2021, to January 30, 2022, detailed that among 852,384 fully vaccinated children 12-17 years and 365,502 children 5-11 years the protection provided

to the older age group declined from 66% to 51%. It also showed that for the younger age group the protection fell dramatically from 68% to 12% over the same period.


While the report released by HYSHD researchers is yet to be peer-reviewed, the team of public health officials who conducted the study has speculated that the dramatic drop in the vaccine's efficacy among children 5 to 11 years old was likely due to the lower dosage they received. Kids in this age group

are given two 10-microgram shots, while children aged 12 to 17 receive 30-microgram shots.

This report comes as the Ministry of Health and Wellness has taken steps to acquire pediatric doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine for children aged five to 11.

The second largest group yet to be inoculated is the "under 1 – 11" age group. The SIB estimates that there are 122,690 children under the age of 12. This population accounts for 28.5% of our total population.





## WOMEN'S MONTH


ALL MARCH LONG

# women


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## #BreakTheBias



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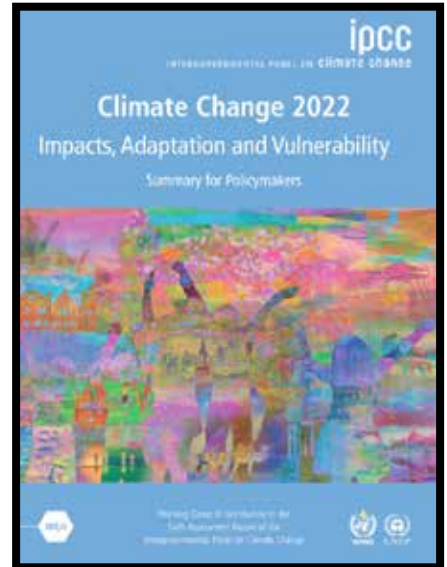
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**Storekeeper I**

Only electronic applications are being accepted at this time.  
For more information or queries, call 227-0954 Ext. 2901 or 1415

**Deadline: Friday, March 11, 2022**

## IPCC: 'Climate change is a threat to human wellbeing and health of the planet'

By Javan Flowers



The United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, released this week, highlighted that "Human-induced climate change is causing dangerous and widespread disruption in nature and affecting the lives of billions of people around the world, despite efforts to reduce the risks."

"This report is a dire warning about the consequences of inaction," said Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC. "It shows that climate change is a grave and mounting threat to our wellbeing and a healthy planet. Our actions today will shape how people adapt, and nature responds to increasing climate risks."

The report highlights that the world faces unavoidable climate hazards over the next two decades with global warming of 1.5°C (2.7°F). Adding that "Even temporarily exceeding this warming level will result in additional severe impacts, some of which will be irreversible."

Speaking with hosts of Sunup on 7, Hon. John Briceño, chairman for the CARICOM 33rd Inter-sessional, noted that climate change adaptation is at the top of the agenda. "The most frustrating thing from developing countries is that they are creating this problem then they are claiming that they're going to help us to to make whatever adaptations that we need – but they don't give us the money."

He continued, "That's when I lashed out at them [at COP26], and I said we are doing our part, you are not doing your part. You need to make the monies available for us to be able to make the necessary changes for our people."

IPCC's report continues, "Increased heatwaves, droughts, and floods are already exceeding plants and animals' tolerance thresholds, driving mass mortalities in species such as trees and corals." Moreover, these weather extremes are coinciding, causing cascading impacts that are increasingly difficult to manage – adding that "they have exposed millions of people to acute food and water insecurity, especially in Africa, Asia, Central, and South America, on Small Islands and in the Arctic."

The IPCC's report suggests that to avoid mounting loss of life, biodiversity, and infrastructure, "ambitious, accelerated action is required to adapt to climate change." But, so far, progress on adaptation is uneven, and there are increasing gaps between action taken and what is needed to deal with the growing risks, the new report finds.

## No Excuses

# Racism in Belize

Sedi Elrington

Racism is as alive in Belize as it is in the USA and the UK. But it is not, perhaps, as rabid! Racism is one of the more pernicious legacies bequeathed to us by the British. It is present in all post-colonial countries. It was routinely practiced in colonial Belize. And naturally, it lives on in our society up to the present time. Racism was ingrained in all colonial people. We are mentally enslaved by it.

In the USA the nomination by President Joe Biden of the first Black woman to sit on the U.S Supreme Court is the subject of intensely heated debates all over that nation. The white supremacists in that country are as appalled at the thought of a black woman being elevated to the United States Supreme Court as they were appalled at the thought of Barack Obama becoming President of that country. To the white supremacists the colour of a person's skin is more important than the content of that person's intellect or moral character.

It is difficult not to entertain the thought that some decisions of PM Briceno is tinged with racial bias. For example, one of his first appointments, that of the new Governor General, was obviously motivated by racism. He wanted to appoint an indigenous woman to that office. And no right thinking Belizean could find any valid basis for criticizing that appointment. The lady is eminently qualified for the post. And, it is equitable that an indigenous person be appointed to it! However, what can legitimately be criticized is the manner in which PM Briceno went about making the appointment. He personally

invited the incumbent Governor General to resign from the post so as to make way for his appointee. Would PM Boris Johnson of England have dared to invite Queen Elizabeth to demit her throne so that he could fill it with an appointee of his own given that she is getting on in years? The PM had obviously not consulted with his Chief Diplomat before approaching the Governor General. His action was unquestionably a flagrant and unpardonable breach of protocol and was in exceedingly poor taste!

Another decision of PM Briceno that is unquestionably being influenced by racial considerations, is his decision not to confirm the Acting Chief Justice, Madam Michelle Arana, to the substantive post of Chief Justice. Evidently those in his inner circle are firmly of the view that our country is not ready for a female Garifuna Chief Justice. And, rather than being candid about that fact and frankly so stating to the Belizean public, his neophyte Attorney General has been tasked to come up with an elaborate piece of Legislation to effect reforms to both the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal, and to lead to the appointment of a person other than Madam Arana as Chief Justice.

It is, of course, not the first time that the Briceno administration is seeking to weaponize the National Assembly to do wrong to a public officer, a born citizen of this country. It will be recalled that only in the month of November 2021 twelve pieces of legislation were passed which had the effect of abolishing the post of Director of Health Services which Dr. Manzanero held, and substituting two newly created posts

namely Director of Public Health and wellness and Director of Hospital Services. Dr Manzanero had incurred the ire of his Minister of Health and the entire Briceno cabinet went to extreme lengths to rid themselves and their administration of his services.

The Attorney General's new suspect Legislation is entitled "Bill for An Act to Repeal and Replace the Supreme Court of Judicature Act and the Court of Appeal Act"; and to provide for matters connected

**Belize cannot at this time afford to pay better salaries to its Ministers' and public officers. But it certainly can pass legislation providing for severe penalties for public officers and their facilitators who are corrupt and misuse their offices for private gains.**

therewith or incidental thereto. In its present iteration it consists of some 209 pages. While no one can deny that there is need for reform in the Legislation governing both our Supreme Court and our Court of Appeal, it cannot be argued in good faith that those reforms are matters of urgency and priority. A cursory glance at the draft shows that if and when enacted, the Legislation will create multiple new posts in the judiciary. But the long standing, perennial complaint of our Chief Justices over the years at the opening of each and every judicial year, is about the woefully inadequate financial resources allocated to finance the work of the judiciary. The latest iteration of that complaint delivered as recently as the 17th January, 2022 by Ag. Chief Justice, Michelle Arana, is as follows: "The judiciary depends on the Executive to provide its funding. This fiscal allocation for the judiciary serves to finance the remit of the general Registry,

the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal. The budgetary allocation for the judiciary for the fiscal year 2021-2022 was \$7,981,654 Belize dollars, reduced from the previous year's budgetary allocation of \$9,567,949 Belize dollars representing a reduction of \$1,586,295 Belize dollars, and a mere 0.00824% of the entire National Budget. This is woefully inadequate."

This writer is not aware of any urgency to draft Legislation governing our

Supreme Court and our Court of Appeal. There is, however, urgent need for other pieces of Legislation. These include legislation relating to corruption and misuse of public office.

It is no secret that corruption and misuse of public office is at epidemic proportions in our little country. This deplorable phenomenon commenced and quickly morphed into epidemic proportions between the period 1964 and the present time. In colonial times criminality among public offices was rare. In those days the two most dreaded public officers were the Auditor General and the Stock Verifier.

The story is told of one errant accountant who used a blow torch to open a government safe to replace a few dollars which he had omitted to deposit when he got word of the imminent arrival of the Auditor General. And, there was no more tense time in the life of the Public Inspector than when it was time for the

annual visit of the stock verifier. He had to ensure that he had present in his warehouse every single file, hammer, saw, shovel, hoe and machete which he had bought with government funds when the stock verifier arrived. Whether it was the Accountant or the Public Health inspector, he faced the prospect of receiving criminal charges in colonial times if he could not give good account of the Talents government had entrusted to his care.

All that changed when our local politicians took over responsibility of our country. In the face of repeated complaints against Ministers who had a penchant for demanding a ten percent of the value of any transaction with government which they facilitated, not even inquiries were carried out into the conduct of such errant Ministers. No record of any such enquiry can be found in our archives. The only known response of our messianic leader, which was passed down by word of mouth, was the pithy, remark: "The Ministers salaries are small."

To avoid that pitfall for his Ministers, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore paid his Ministers handsomely, better than they would be paid in the private sector. As a consequence the Ministers of Government of Singapore have a reputation for being scrupulously clean and honest.

In the case of public officers the early practice was for our messianic leader to be informed by whistleblowers of public officers who were pilfering public assets such as paint, lumber and fuel. The leader would then contact those public officers informally, and disclose to them that he was aware of their dishonesty but

that he would ensure that they would not be prosecuted. By so doing he converted formerly hostile public officers into fanatical followers of his party. That, in essence, is the genesis of corruption in our public service.

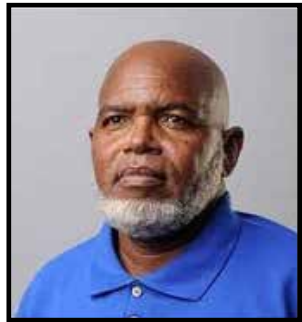
Belize cannot at this time afford to pay better salaries to its Ministers' and public officers. But it certainly can pass legislation providing for severe penalties for public officers and their facilitators who are corrupt and misuse their offices for private gains. We can also pass legislation providing for the recovery of ill-gotten gains, the rightful property of the Belizean people. All our current judges are eminently capable of adjudicating disputes emanating from such legislation. Those are the pieces of legislations that our country currently needs at this time.

Incidentally, after careful study of judgments given by the House of Lords, the Privy Council, the United States Supreme Court, and the Caribbean Court of Justice this writer is convinced that the most important qualities of a judge are integrity, strength of character and respect for everyone including the meek and lowly. These characteristics trump judicial erudition which is increasingly hard to find these days. Ag. C.J. Michelle Arana has demonstrated over the years that she has all three in good measure.

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# GRASSROOTS

## The Conflict in Ukraine and its Possible Effects on Belize



By Hon. Gilroy Usher

“Let us never negotiate out of fear. But let us never fear to negotiate.”  
 –John Kennedy

On Thursday Russia began an invasion of its much smaller and weaker neighbor, Ukraine from the East, North,

and South with ground troops, airstrikes, and tank fire. In the bombardment the Russians hit cities and bases in addition to other strategic targets with minimal resistance.

Russia claims its action is necessary to protect thousands of its citizens in pro Russian Donetsk and Luhansk, the two separatist areas that broke away from Ukraine 8 years ago in 2014

Only Russian has recognized Donetsk and Luhansk as independent countries.

Russian also claims its action is necessary to maintain its security, after Ukraine accepted an invitation to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization NATO. The alliance vows to come to the defense of any member, who is the victim of aggression by a hostile power.

Russia, Ukraine, and scores of states around them, became independent countries with the breakup of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991 after 69 years.

NATO consists of democratic countries while USSR consisted of mainly socialist or communist states.

Both NATO and USSR always felt that its system of governance was better to address the needs of man, and they both did everything possible to impose their system on other counties often with bloody takeovers.

NATO and Russia also want to control Ukraine, because it's the second largest country in Europe; its population of over 40 million is a huge market for all types of products; it is rich in natural gas, iron ore, and many other natural resources, and Ukraine is among the world's top ten agriculture producers.

Due to their possession of nuclear

weapons, the two blocks of nations never fought directly with each other. That would have resulted in mutual total destruction.

With the breakup of the USSR 30 years ago, NATO seeks to increase its world dominance by inviting Ukraine and other neighboring countries of Russia into its folk.

In exchange for a foothold in Russia's backyard, NATO offers its new members tons of sophisticated weapons and guaranteed safety against aggression by hostile countries.

Ukraine's willingness to accept NATO's offer has angered Russia. Russia fears NATO would use its presence in Ukraine and other neighboring states to encircle and

*Such actions show that despite all the macho talk publicly, many problems including those with the unions and G.O.B., or the Christian Workers Union (CWU) and Port of Belize (P.B.L.) can be solved through quiet and sincere negotiations away from the cameras.*

eventually attack it.

For that reason Russian President Vladimir Putin has stated that he will only halt the invasion of Ukraine, if the country demilitarizes and pledges never to join NATO.

To backup his tough talk, the Russian President stated that Ukraine does not have to exist as an independent country and he has threatened foreign counties attempting to interfere with his actions in Ukraine with “consequence you have never seen.”

Ukraine is still not a member of NATO. Therefore if it decides to resist the invasion, it has to do so on its own as NATO is not supplying it with troops only more weapons, they would have to manage themselves.

The invasion follows fruitless calls for a negotiated solution to the problem by United Nations, NATO, and scores of world leaders.

The conflict between Russia and Ukraine is important to Belize, which has a problem though territorial with Guatemala, its much larger and more powerful neighbor to the west and south.

It is good that after years of fruitless negotiations, a serious threat of invasion by Guatemala, and several dangerous confrontation in the Sarstoon River, reason prevailed between the two countries.

Due to that level head thinking, it was mutually agreed that the dispute be sent to the ICJ for a final resolution.

If Belize had remained uncompromising in trying to resolve the dispute, believing it could rely on mother, England to defend its territory after independence, we might have end up like

Ukraine.

The government of Belize would probably had been toppled or our territory taken by the enemy, because United Nations, NATO, and dozens world leaders are toothless tigers, when it comes to defending small nations against large aggressors or internal coups.

All those groups do is talk and impose sanctions that most of the time fail to achieve the required results. That's because most of the targeted counties find ways to get around the sanctions.

The Cuban Crisis in October 1962 between the United States and the USSR was averted, when the USSR agreed to remove nuclear-armed Soviet missiles from Cuban that's only 90 miles from the shores of the United States.

In the agreement United States also secretly agreed to remove nuclear weapons from Turkey that were within striking distance of the USSR.

Such actions show that despite all the macho talk publicly, many problems including those with the unions and G.O.B., or the Christian Workers Union (CWU) and Port of Belize (P.B.L.) can be solved through quiet and sincere negotiations away from the cameras.

The conflict in Ukraine will result in increase in the cost of fuel and other imported goods as insurance companies increase the cost of their coverage for ships and cargo in a more volatile world. If the conflict is not resolved quickly, it's reasonable to expect that Belizeans will have to go deeper into their pockets to access foreign products.

A prolonged conflict in Europe will also have a negative effect on travel and cruise tourism arrival worldwide including in Belize.

Less persons travel when they are apprehensive about what could happen to their country or family as a result of a war. And the risk of lost due a major conflict increases the cost of travel to and from certain areas of the world. A very lengthy conflict in Ukraine could therefore result in a slight decrease in tourist arrivals to the country.

If Russia is allowed to use force to replace the democratically elected government of Ukraine with a puppet regime of its choosing, that will add further encouragement for the violent takeover of democratic governments in Asia, Africa, Central America, and other places around the globe.

In a similar way, if the big bear succeeds in annexing the two separatists region of the former state of the USSR or the entire territory of Ukraine that will encourage bigger and stronger counties to resort to brute force to settle territorial claims with small countries, even if some of them had already agreed to settle their disputes through peaceful negotiations.

Without a doubt, such a reversal of policy by Guatemala would be disastrous for Belize.

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### Notice of Dissolution

Notice is hereby given that the following companies have been dissolved and struck off the International Business Companies Register with effect from the date indicated below:

<u>COMPANY NAME</u>	<u>DISSOLUTION DATE</u>
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BEFLATTIN TRADING LIMITED	21-Jan-22
LENVILLE HOLDINGS LIMITED	24-Feb-22
EUROSTEEL TRADE LIMITED	25-Feb-22
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# The Righters Write

## Women and rights

Contributed by the Human Rights Commission

Belize is observing March as women’s month. Women’s achievements of the past are celebrated, homage is paid to the strong in the present and there is a resounding call for the protection of women and girls so they can enjoy their freedoms and rights without violence. But why? Simply put, women and girls globally have persistently been marginalized and face numerous inequalities. The United Nations Foundation reports that “in every region of the world, girls and women are still more likely to be poor, illiterate, hungry, unhealthy, underrepresented in leadership positions, legally constrained, politically marginalized,

and endangered by violence.” The gender gap can be larger in some countries compared to others. In Belize, women and girls generally are able to enjoy their freedoms but many still face some sort of violence and other inequalities. The global struggle towards gender equality has been ongoing for decades and has been well documented but women and girls still face systemic barriers to full participation and wider gaps in opportunity and equality.

In Belize’s context, UN Women reports that “In Belize, in 2016, 64.9% of women of reproductive age (15-49 years) had their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods. However, work still

needs to be done in Belize to achieve gender equality. 33.5% of women aged 20–24 years old who were married or in a union before age 18. The adolescent birth rate is 58.2 per 1,000 women aged 15-19 as of 2019, down from 65.4 per 1,000 in 2018. As of February 2021, only 12.5% of seats in parliament were held by women. In 2018, 7.8% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.”

It goes on to add that “As of December 2020, only 36.9% of indicators needed to monitor the SDGs [Sustainable Development Goals] from a gender perspective were available, with

gaps in key areas, in particular: unpaid care and domestic work and information and communications technology skills. In addition, many areas – such as gender and poverty, physical and sexual harassment, women’s access to assets (including land), and gender and the environment – lack comparable methodologies for regular monitoring. Closing these gender data gaps is essential for achieving gender-related SDG commitments in Belize.”

At the end of 2019, the COVID 19 pandemic hit the world. With it came more challenges for human rights defenders as the pandemic exacerbated human rights violations of all forms, including against women and girls. The World Economic Forum states in its Global Gender Gap Report 2021 that “Another generation of women will have to wait for gender parity... As the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be felt, closing the global gender gap has increased by a generation from 99.5 years to 135.6 years.” It does say that progress is being made in areas including science and politics, adding the improving paternity policies and representation of women will help. The Global Gender Gap Report assesses

areas including economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and political empowerment.

equality between women and men and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women are fundamental human rights. The United Nations states that “Achieving equality between women and men requires a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which women experience discrimination and are denied equality so as to develop appropriate strategies to eliminate such discrimination.”

Amnesty international states that “Until women enjoy the same rights as men, this inequality is everyone’s problem... According to the UN, “gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is not just a goal in itself, but a key to sustainable development, economic growth, and peace and security”. Research has shown this to be the case – society gets better for everyone when women’s rights are upheld and taken seriously.”

Belize is making small strides. Minister of Human Development Dolores Balderamos Garcia addressed the nation at the start of March saying, “When women are meaningfully

represented and engaged in leadership bodies such as the Legislature, courts, executive boards, and community councils, laws, rulings, and decisions are more likely to be inclusive and representative and diverse views are taken into account”.

Grassroots organizations and human rights defenders in the country have kept steady towards achieving positive change for women and girls, but there is still more work to do.

Collectively, more can be achieved to #BreakThe Bias. This is the campaign theme for this year’s women’s month, #BreakTheBias. International Women’s Day online age states, “We can break the bias in our communities. We can break the bias in our workplaces. We can break the bias in our schools, colleges and universities. Together, we can all break the bias - on International Women’s Day (IWD) and beyond.”

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**PUBLIC AUCTION SALE: PROPERTY**  
*La Milpa Area, Ladyville, Belize District*

BY ORDER of the Mortgagees, Messrs. St. John’s Credit Union Limited, Licensed Auctioneers Kevin A. Castillo and Christiana R. Castillo are selling ONLINE via [belizepropertyauctions.com](http://belizepropertyauctions.com) the below described property. Sale currently running and will expire on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> March 2022 at 10:00 am: **Lot No. 88 La Milpa Area, Ladyville Village, Belize District:**



REGISTRATION SECTION	BLOCK	PARCEL
Ladyville/Lord’s Bank	16	5981

(Being a concrete bungalow dwelling house [735 sq. ft.] containing 3 bedrooms + 2 bathrooms + living/dining/kitchen situate in La Milpa Area, Ladyville, Belize District, the freehold property of Ms. Lorna Oyerinde)

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# First-ever scan of a dying human brain reveals life may actually 'flash before your eyes'

After an elderly patient died suddenly during a routine test, scientists accidentally captured unique data on the activity in his brain at the very end of his life: During the 30 seconds before and after the man's heart stopped, his brain waves were remarkably similar to those seen during dreaming, memory recall and meditation, suggesting that people may actually see their life "flash before their eyes" when they die.

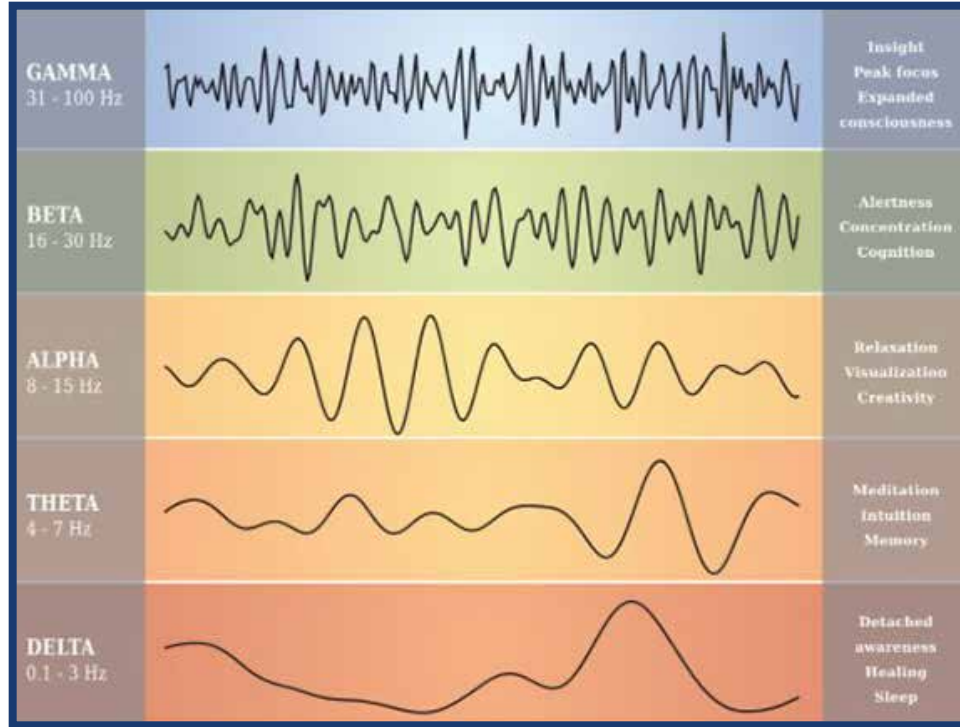
The phenomenon of replaying past memories when you die has been reported by some people who have had near-death experiences. But this is the first scientific evidence that this "flash" might be real. However, as this is the only case study, it is impossible to make assumptions about how common the phenomenon may be or what the experience may be like.

Researchers made the startling discovery in 2016 while studying the brain activity in an 87-year-old Canadian man who had developed epilepsy. The team was performing an electroencephalogram (EEG) — a test that detects abnormalities in the electrical activity of the brain — to learn more about what was happening during his seizures. That's when the man suffered a sudden and fatal heart attack. The patient's unexpected death meant that the team had accidentally made the first-ever recording of a dying brain, the researchers said in a statement.

In total, the researchers recorded around 900 seconds of brain activity leading up to and immediately after the patient's death. This allowed them to see how his neural oscillations — repetitive patterns of neural activity, also known as brain waves — changed as he was dying. They found that in the 30 seconds before and after his heart stopped, there was an unusual change in his brain wave activity.

"Just before and after the heart stopped working, we saw changes in a specific band of neural oscillations," senior researcher Dr. Ajmal Zemmar, a neurosurgeon at the University of Toronto in Canada at the time of the man's case, said in the statement. These specific types of oscillations are known as gamma waves, added Zemmar, who is now at the

# may actually 'flash before your eyes'



last recall of important life events just before we die, similar to the ones reported in near-death experiences," Zemmar said in the statement.

Experiments in rats have shown that the rodents also experience similar levels of gamma oscillations around the time of death, according to the statement. Therefore, the researchers speculate that life recall may be a universal experience shared by a majority of mammal dying brains, although there is minimal evidence to back this up.

But the researchers warned that it would be premature to conclusively state that life recall is a

University of Louisville in Kentucky.

Neural oscillations are classified based on their frequency and amplitude. Gamma waves have a frequency between 30 and 100 hertz, the highest frequency of any oscillations, and are most commonly observed in the brain when people access their memory center, in a region called the hippocampus, during dreams.

The team also gathered data on other types of oscillations during death, including delta, theta, alpha and beta waves. But it was the gamma waves that pointed toward the man replaying memories from throughout his life in his brain — a phenomenon known as life recall.

"Through generating oscillations involved in memory retrieval, the brain may be playing a

real phenomenon. The dying man was elderly and had epilepsy, which is known to alter gamma wave activity. This could have meant his brain activity during death was different from that of someone without epilepsy. Moreover, there is no way to know if the man was actually seeing, or perceiving, his past memories or if he was just in a dream-like state brought on by his failing nervous system.

Therefore, much more research is needed to make concrete conclusions about life recall, the researchers cautioned. The report of the man's case was not published until six years after his death because the researchers were hoping to uncover more case studies of dying brains to support their claims, but they came up empty-handed.

## S U D O K U

Medium Puzzle

		3			2	4		
		4						
5	6	8					1	
			7				3	
	2						7	6
					3	8		
7				4	9			8
	5						9	
		1	5					

Answer to Puzzle

2	4	3	7	9	5	1	6	8
7	1	6	8	2	3	9	5	4
5	8	9	6	4	1	2	3	7
1	6	8	3	5	2	7	4	9
6	7	5	1	8	4	9	2	3
4	3	2	9	6	7	5	8	1
3	2	1	4	7	6	8	9	5
9	9	7	5	3	8	4	1	2
8	5	4	2	1	6	3	7	9

Sudoku rules are extremely easy: Fill all empty squares so that the numbers 1 to 9 appear once in each row, column and 3x3 box. Tip. Use a soft erasable pencil. Start with the easy puzzles, then move on to the harder ones. Make small pencilmarks to show which numbers are allowed in empty squares. This will come handy when analyzing techniques are used. Never guess! Only make moves based on logical deductions. There is only one unique solution for each puzzle.



## FUN FACTS!

### Trees secretly talk to each other

Trees secretly talk to each other underground. They're passing information and resources to and from each other through a network of mycorrhizal fungi—mykós means fungus and riza means root in Greek—a mat of long, thin filaments that connect an estimated 90% of land plants. Scientists call the fungi the Wood Wide Web because 'adult' trees can share sugars to younger trees, sick trees can send their remaining resources back into the network for others, and they can communicate with each other about dangers like insect infestations.

The relationship between these mycorrhizal fungi and the plants they connect is now known to be ancient (around four hundred and fifty million years old) and largely one of mutualism—a sub-



set of symbiosis in which both organisms benefit from their association.

In the case of the mycorrhizae, the fungi siphon off food from the trees, taking some of the carbon-rich sugar that they produce during photosynthesis. The plants, in turn, obtain nutrients

such as phosphorus and nitrogen that the fungi have acquired from the soil, by means of enzymes that the trees do not possess...

The revelation of the Wood Wide Web's existence, and the increased understanding of its functions, raises big questions—

about where species begin and end; about whether a forest might be better imagined as a single super-organism, rather than a grouping of independent individualistic ones; and about what trading, sharing, or even friendship might mean among plants.



#### Youngest Population?

**Niger has the youngest population of any country. 50% are below 15 years old.**



#### Amazing Body!

**You have more than 600 muscles in your body.**



## COLOR ME

Alongside the elephant and rhinoceros, the common hippo is one of the biggest animals on our planet. An average, full-grown male can reach up to 7,000 pounds



Though the Greeks called them "river horses" and you will almost always see hippos in the water, they can't actually swim or float.

Interestingly, the hippo's body has adapted to allow the calves to nurse both on land and underwater. The eyes and nostrils close to prevent the calf from ingesting water and they can maintain this position for several minutes.

Hippos are very loud and use a series of noises to communicate with one another in their groups. These sounds are quite distinct and have been described as honks, growls, whines, and squeaks. At times, it also resembles the sound of human laughter.

The main predators of hippos are large cats, crocodiles, and hyenas. They will often go after the smallest offspring, especially if they've wandered away from the protection of the group. They also look for old and injured hippos that are vulnerable to an attack and unable to defend themselves.

Their bodies have been designed to create their own sunscreen of sorts. They secrete a pinkish sweat that covers the length of their bodies. They don't actually have sweat glands, but this oily substance comes from pores in their skin and protects them from sun damage and prevents infection.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS**  
**VACANCY NOTICE**

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill the post of **Assistant Procurement Manager, Central Medical Stores, Ministry of Health & Wellness.**

**Principal Duties:** Ensure assigning and delivery of requisitions within the CMS scheduled delivery to health facilities countrywide. Track stock levels and report none delivery of tender items to Procurement Manager for sourcing ensuring availability.

**Salary Pay Scale:** 11 of \$19,301 x 890 - \$36,211 per annum

**Qualification:** Associates Degree in Applied Science  
Registered Pharmacist  
Minimum 5years Experience in Hospital Pharmacy

**Deadline:** Deadline is March 14th, 2022  
Application with two (2) references on professional experience and copies of qualifications and a Curriculum Vita are to be submitted to: -

Chief Executive Officer  
Ministry of Health & Wellness  
Belmopan

[ceosecretary@health.gov.bz](mailto:ceosecretary@health.gov.bz)

Note: Please visit [www.health.gov.bz](http://www.health.gov.bz) to view the copy of the Terms of Reference for this vacant post.

BELIZE, 2022

IN THE SUPREME COURT – PROBATE SIDE.


**STATUTORY NOTICE TO CREDITORS**

IN THE ESTATE OF CRISTAVEL VILMA ROMERO a.k.a. VILMA ROMERO

Deceased Late of No. 82 Fourth Avenue, Corozal Town, Corozal District, Belize.

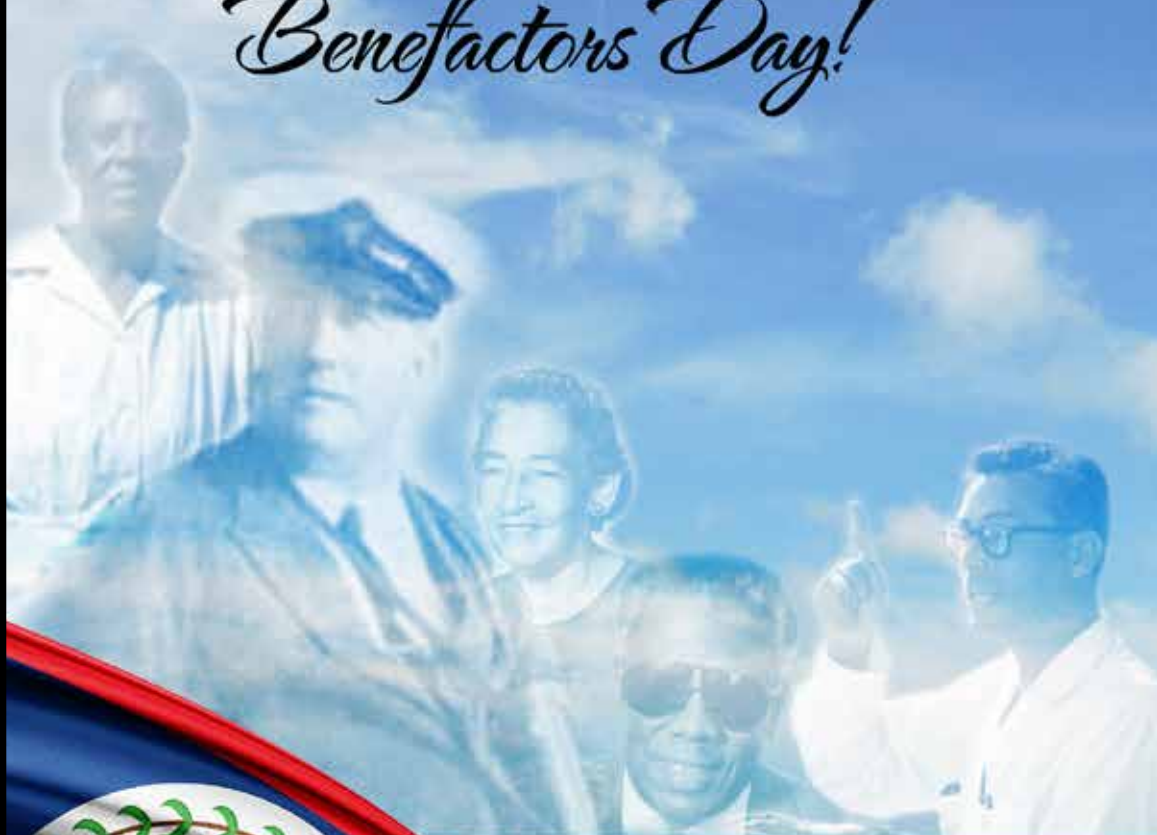
NOTICE is hereby given pursuant to Section 36 of the Administration of Estates Act Chapter 197 of the Laws of Belize that all persons having claims as creditors against the above-named deceased or her estate, are required to lodge any such claim(s) with **MANUEL ROMERO** and **RACHEL COYE**, Administrators of the above-mentioned Estate, c/o Bradley Ellis & Co. LLP of No. 52 Regent Street, Belize City, Belize, within three (3) months from the first publication of this notice after which date the Administrators shall proceed to distribute the assets of the estate among the beneficiaries entitled thereto having regard only to such claims of which the Administrators will then have had notice.

DATED this 24<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2022

  
**BRADLEY ELLIS & CO. LLP**  
Attorneys-at-Law for  
**MANUEL ROMERO** and  
**RACHEL COYE**, Administrators  
of the Estate of Cristavel Vilma  
Romero a.k.a. Vilma Romero

*Benny's wishes all Belizeans  
a Safe & Happy*

*National Heroes and  
Benefactors Day!*



Tel: 2-BEN-BEN (223-6236)  
2 1/2 Miles Philip Goldson Highway | 38 Regent St., Belize City | 43 Miles George Price Hwy.  
**sales@bennys.bz**

# PRESS RELEASE

## Members of the Belizean Diaspora Donate Laptops to Secondary School Children

Wednesday, March 2nd, 2022 – The Ministry of Tourism and Diaspora Relations (MTDR) has received a donation of 130 laptops and accessories from Belizeans living at home and abroad that will be distributed to secondary school children by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MoECST).

Build Belize Inc, which is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, organized the “Donate to Educate” program in collaboration with MTDR and MoECST. Present at the handing over ceremony were Ambassador Sandhya Murphy on behalf of Build Belize Inc., Hon. Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations; Hon. Francis Fonseca, Minister of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology; CEO Nicole Solano; CEO Dian Maheia and other representatives from both MTDR and MoECST.

The donation, valued at over \$150,000.00, includes laptops of various brands such as Lenovo, HP, Asus, Gateway, Samsung and Acer. Student recipients will be required to demonstrate responsibility, and a certain level of accountability for the devices. As a part of the distribution process, the MoECST will work with schools to establish a community service arrangement, and a tracking app will be utilized to ensure the security of the devices.

The mission of Build Belize Inc. is to empower and improve the lives of Belizeans through education, health, and community service. The organization supports the Belizean diaspora by coordinating efforts and assisting them to make contributions to the overall socio-economic development of Belize.

The Belizean diaspora and local Belizeans are encouraged to continue supporting children of Belize. More information on the program, including the donor list, FAQs and other information regarding the “Donate to Educate” campaign, can be found at [buildbelizeinc.org](http://buildbelizeinc.org)

The MTDR, MoECST and Build Belize wish to thank all generous donors for investing in education and for supporting Belizean secondary-school children.

For more information, please contact the MTDR Diaspora Relations Unit at 227-2591 or email [diaspora.relations@tourism.gov.bz](mailto:diaspora.relations@tourism.gov.bz)



# Belize champions Biodiversity at UNEA 5.2

By William Ysaguirre



Minister Orlando Habet speaking at the conference

Belize championed the triple causes of biodiversity, fighting climate change, and eliminating pollution and waste at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2), where Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change, and Disaster Risk Management Hon. Orlando Habet presented Belize’s achievements in this regard.

The week-long conference also marked the Golden Jubilee of the United Nations Environment Programme in Nairobi, Kenya, from February 28 to March 4,

Belize has been leading the charge against plastics pollution by introducing a ban on single-use plastics in 2018, which became law in 2020. Belize also joined the Commonwealth Litter Programme for the waste management of marine litter in July 2019.

Seventeen resolutions were proposed at the meeting of which the most critical for Belize was the Resolution to End Plastic Pollution. UNEA presi-

dent Espen Barth Eide finalized the resolution using a gavel made from recycled plastic, after the heads of state, ministers of environment and other representatives of 175 nations endorsed the landmark treaty, which will be legally binding and will address the full life cycle of plastics. A negotiating committee will spend the next two years hammering out the final deal.

“We now have one text. It speaks to full life cycle; it speaks to legally binding; it speaks to a financing mechanism; it speaks to understanding some countries can do it more easily than others,” said UNEP executive director Inger Andersen. He called it the most significant environmental multilateral deal since the Paris climate accord in 2015.

Belize also supported the Resolution on Green Recovery, the Resolution on Nature Based Solutions for supporting sustainable development, the Resolution on Science Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution, and the Resolution on Environmental aspects of minerals and metals management, as key to agreement towards a global treaty.

“Belize will continue to be a leader in the Caribbean and Central American sub-regions in tackling the challenges faced by humanity,” Minister Habet told the Assembly, as he emphasized the “need to foster the

inclusivity of SIDS and LDCs to have full unimpeded and equal access to benefits of our global agreements”. The need for system level change through the entire plastic value chain and a binding agreement on marine litter pollution is equally urgent, he declared, as he called on the Assembly “to support financing, capacity building, technology transfer, and building appropriate monitoring, reporting, and verification systems.”

Belize, with 60 percent of its land mass under original forest cover and 35 percent under nature protection, and 20 percent of its seas under marine protected areas, is well on the way to achieving the goals of the UN’s “30 X 30” initiative, which Belize endorsed. This is the goal of the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, to have 30 percent of the World’s oceans and seas and 30 percent of the Earth’s land mass under nature protection by 2030. The Belize delegation also presented Belize’s signature Blue Bond to member states of the Coalition.

Minister Habet also addressed the Assembly on “Strengthening UNEP for the Implementation of the Environmental Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda” on Friday on March 4. Chief Executive Officer Kenrick Williams PhD and Senior Environmental Officer Anthony Mai accompanied Habet to the meeting.

### RF&G LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

Date: March 3, 2022

Ravey Vasquez of #Hall’s Layout, Corozal District, Belize C.A. having made written declaration that Policy 5000014816 under RF&G Life Insurance Company Ltd has been lost and having made request to the Company for a duplicate of the Policy, notice is hereby given that unless objection is raised within one month of the date herein, the requested duplicate policy will be issued.

## EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The U.S. Embassy Belmopan is seeking eligible and qualified applicants for the following position:

**Position Name:** Engineering Technician (Building Automated System)  
**Vacancy number:** Belmopan-2022-04  
**Closing date:** March 18th, 2022

Interested applicants must submit their application via the Electronic Recruitment Application (ERA) system, a web-based system. To view and apply for this vacancy, visit the ERA site at: <https://erajobs.state.gov/dos-era/blz/vacancysearch/searchVacancies.hms>

Please visit the Embassy’s website for instructions on how to apply via the ERA system: <https://bz.usembassy.gov/embassy/jobs/>

**Note 1:** Resumes will not be considered. Candidates must note all work experience when completing the ERA application. Insufficient or incomplete information will result in an ineligible application.

**Note 2:** Candidates must submit applicable required documentation by the closing date of this announcement. Failure to provide the required documentation will result in an ineligible application.

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS**  
**VACANCY NOTICE**

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill the post of **Procurement Officer, Central Medical Stores, Ministry of Health & Wellness.**

**Principal Duties:** Ensure assigning and delivery of requisitions within the CMS scheduled delivery to health facilities countrywide. Track stock levels and report none delivery of tender items to Procurement Manager for sourcing, ensuring availability.

**Salary Pay Scale:** 10 of \$18,367 x 878 - \$35,048 per annum

**Qualification:** Associates Degree in Applied Science - Pharmacy  
Registered Pharmacist  
Minimum 5years Experience in Hospital Pharmacy

**Deadline:** Deadline is March 14th, 2022  
Application with two (2) references on professional experience and copies of qualifications and a Curriculum Vita are to be submitted to: -

Chief Executive Officer  
Ministry of Health & Wellness  
Belmopan

[ceosecretary@health.gov.bz](mailto:ceosecretary@health.gov.bz)

**Note:** Please visit [www.health.gov.bz](http://www.health.gov.bz) to view the copy of the Terms of Reference for this vacant post.

**FUEL UP AND REFRESH WITH SHELL**

Receive a free refreshing drink, when you fuel up with \$25 between **11am and 6pm** at any Shell Service Station.

Promotion runs from March 2nd until March 7th, 2022 or while stocks last.



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**BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY**

**Digital Records Management Workshop**

**ZOOM EVENT**

March 17th, 2022 at 8:00am to 12:00pm  
Member: \$150.00 Non-Member: \$250.00  
(GST Included)

**Course Description:**

The success of a records management system, both traditional or hybrid, is based in the foundation of records management approaches and skills through a thorough understanding of professional principles and concepts that records are managed throughout their life cycle, from creation to disposition.

**Course Objectives:**

- Understand the foundations of records and information management.
- Understanding and managing current and non-current records in a hybrid system.

Facilitated by UWI



To register contact the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry at  
email: [bcci@belize.org](mailto:bcci@belize.org) | tel: 223-5330 | cell: 614-3138

**UWI**

**2022 Workshops**



**The Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry (BCCI)**

Workshops will be Facilitated by University of the West Indies, Open Campus Belize (UWI) and Belize Training & Employment Centre (BTEC)

For more information contact BCCI at  
(501) 614-3138 | [bcci@belize.org](mailto:bcci@belize.org) | (501) 223-5330

Effective Business Communication (considering teleworking and the new digital age)	February 24th	UWI
Marketing and Sales (Inclusive of digitization)	March 2nd	UWI
Digital Records Management	March 17th	UWI
Professional Etiquette	March 23rd	BTEC
Employee Engagement & Productivity during COVID-19	March 30th	The Connection Group
Telephone Etiquette	April 6th	BTEC
Advanced Customer Service	May 10th	BTEC
Service Recovery Handling Difficult Customers	May 17th	BTEC
Disciplinary Action - The Importance of Documentation	May 25th	BTEC
Marketing and Sales (Inclusive of digitization)	June 7th	UWI
How to Build New Habits and Break Old Ones.	June 16th	The Connection Group
Conflict Resolution: How Conflict Can Empower Healthy Relationships	June 30th	The Connection Group
Balancing Priorities: How to Successfully Manage Healthy Relationships	July 14th	The Connection Group
Crisis Management	July 21st	BTEC
Managing Anxiety and Uncertainty	August 11th	The Connection Group
Strategic Planning & Management	August 24th	UWI
Disciplinary Action - The Importance of Documentation	October 6th	UWI
Brain Management for Stress Management	October 20th	The Connection Group
Planning and Decision Making	October 20th	The Connection Group
Advanced Customer Service	November 2nd	BTEC



# THE BUSINESS PERSPECTIVE



## Fuel Prices and the 'Engine of Growth'

Contributed by Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry

It is clearly no secret: Belize is a net importer when it comes to fuel products, with gasoline being chief among them. As an imported commodity, Belize has to contend with the international prices and associated acquisition costs. That is an indisputable fact.

Also an unavoidable fact is the reality that oil price shocks have been known to drag on a country's economic growth prospects. The higher energy costs, therefore, are often cited as a "downside" risk by economists. For instance, the recent International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s concluding statement states:

"Risks to [Belize's] outlook are substantial and tilted to the downside. A key risk is an escalation of the pandemic. ... Inflation could rise further because of second round effects and higher international energy and food prices."

Figure 1 informs towards a similar point. There is an observable inverse pattern between international oil prices (specifically the West Texas Intermediaries, WTI benchmark) and Belize's GDP growth rate. From a business perspective, this makes perfect sense when one recalls that energy cost is ultimately a part of an input cost for firms.

Of course, the firms—depending on the level of elasticity of their products—have the option of passing on some of those input costs to the final consumer, but the reality is that not every company has that luxury, especially during these COVID times. Besides, passing the increase through to the final consumer simply adds to the inflationary pressures, which itself is cited as a downside risk to economic growth.

### A Rock and a Hard Place

Now, knowing that high energy prices can weigh down on any net-oil-importing economy is one thing. The trick, however, is what to do about it? That is a question faced by oil-importing jurisdictions worldwide.

Last June, for example, news consumers may recall Barbadian Prime Minister Mia Mottley virtually pleading with her citizens, saying, "I feel your pain. We will cap if oil prices continue to go up, but ah begging you to understand our [the government's] position too."

Mottley elaborated on that position:

"We ain't got no money tree and the bottom line is we still paying for people to go to university. We still covering everybody's education from pre-primary right to tertiary. We are covering all the access at the hospital and polyclinics and on top of that we covering everything with respect to COVID, as well as the testing."

Here in Belize, the high debt-to-GDP ratio (more than 100%) and the budget deficit signals that we are likewise strapped for cash.

In that strapped-for-cash (limited fiscal-space) scenario, enter the call for GOB to "do something about fuel prices". The go-to options are often within the family of subsidies—whether direct, indirect or "hidden". "Hidden" is added to the list, because as Todd Litman of the Victoria Transport Policy Institute had put it, "Since most fuel taxes are per unit (per gallon or liter), they must be increased periodically to account for inflation or they lose their value. Failure to do this is a hidden form of subsidy."

And that brings us to where we are today. On the one hand, the economy struggles with higher energy costs such as fuel. On the other hand, however, subsidies are not without their costs on the

public purse. As a result, the hunt should be for a solution that counters the downward economic pressures, while simultaneously practicing prudent fiscal management at a time when debt levels are already elevated. That's the epitome of being between a rock and a hard place.

### Excise and Other Taxes

To date, the conversation in public sphere has seemingly picked a preferred policy response: Capping or cutting the taxes charged on the

a total of \$700. At this point in time, the excise accounts—in this illustration—for about 29% of the total.

Months later, the price increases to \$7.00. The individual purchases the same 100 gallons. The pre-tax value is now \$700. However, the excise continues to be charged at \$2.00 per gallon, and, therefore, still adds only \$200, leading to a final value of \$900. In this case, the excise only accounts for 22% of the total, down close to seven

percentage points from where it originally stood.

In similar fashion, that is what explains the change in the percentage distribution between January 2021 and January 2022 as far as the excise tax is concerned (i.e. from 49% to about 35%). At this juncture, one could then appreciate why Todd Litman speaks of the "hidden subsidy." From that Litman logic, it could be argued that the fact that the excise tax has not been "uprated" by GOB since 2017—despite the global price pressures—is a "de facto" subsidy.

### The Need for Help

Of course, understanding the nature of the problem has never been sufficient enough of a cure. While the complex nature

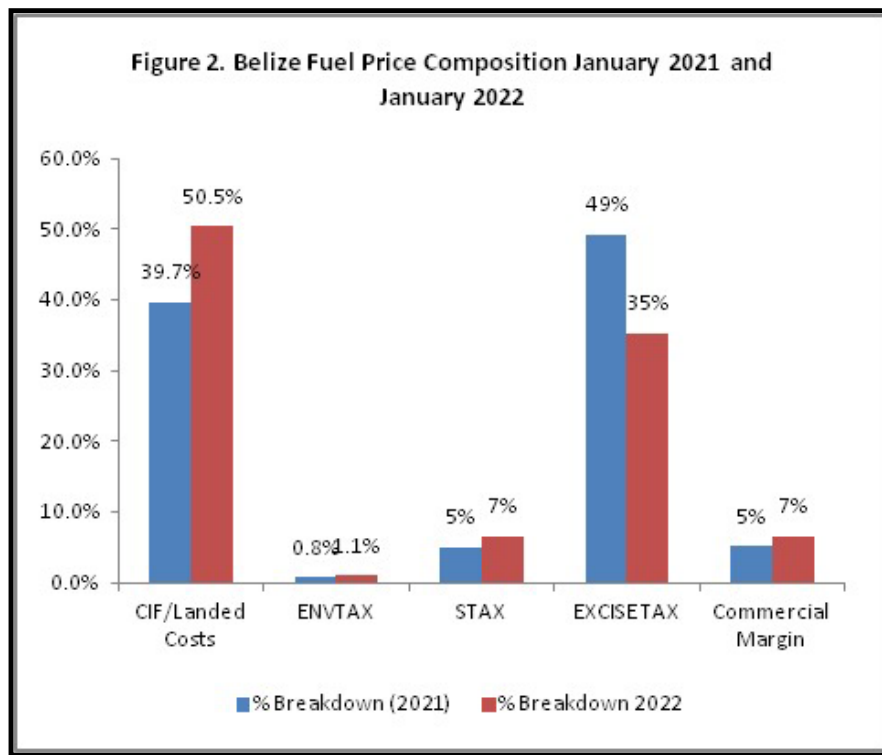
of the fuel price debacle is not lost on the private sector, businesses are simultaneously faced with yet another variable that is pushing down and against growth, as if COVID-19 was not already a challenge.

And while there are some who ostensibly enjoy demonizing—with a broad brush—the entire private

sector, it is worth remembering that it is that private sector that serves as the engine of growth, without which there wouldn't be much of a Belizean economy to speak of.

COVID-19, hopefully, showed everyone the fact that as businesses were shuttered or otherwise limited in their activities, it likewise impacted public-sector revenues. Conversely, as businesses start to regain (some of) their momentum, lo and behold the returning skip (however slightly) in the public purse's steps to the point that even the salary cut of 2021 is promised to be reversed.

So, keeping with that motor vehicle motif, that engine (of growth) is squeaking and the dashboard warning light is on. We could keep driving the car, ignoring those signs, but every driver knows that the choice between addressing the squeak and the warning light immediately or later is equivalent to the choice between spending a little at the mechanic today or a lot tomorrow.

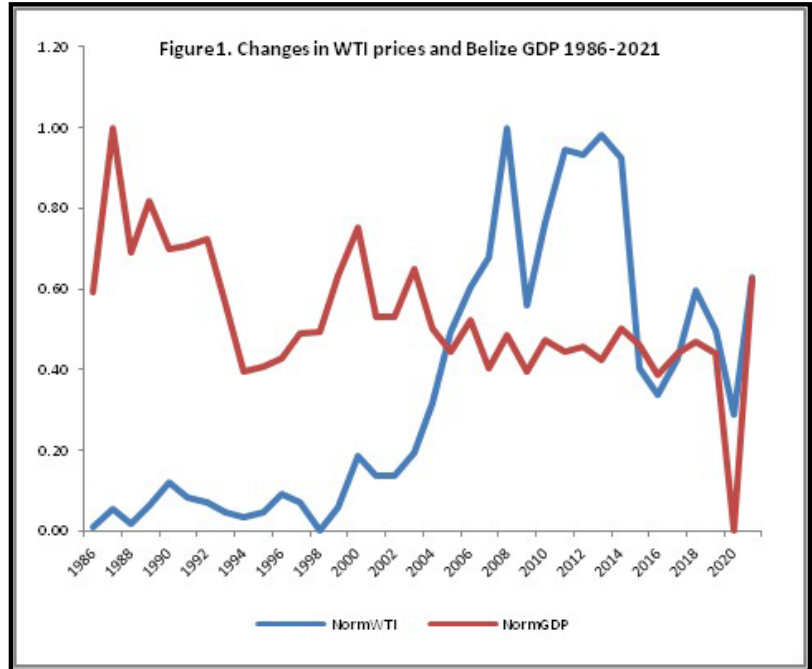


various fuel products (diesel, kerosene, premium gasoline, and regular gasoline). On the surface, this sounds like the panacea, because the suggestion is built on an idea that all GOB's taxes automatically increased alongside the international price increases.

Unfortunately, that is only true of two of the three taxes: the General Sales Tax (GST) and the Environmental Tax (ET), which accounts for just about 8% of the final pump price. As Figure 2 informs, as far as taxes go, the Excise Tax is the heavy hitter, accounting for about 35% of the final price as of January 2022, down from its 49% position just one year ago.

Unlike the GST or ET, which are ad valorem taxes (charged as a percentage of the imported value of the fuel products), the Excise Tax is a per-unit tax and is thus charged per (imperial) gallons. Consequently, the increasing international prices, the climbing acquisition costs, and ultimately the final price changes have no impact on this particular tax, because it is applied strictly to the quantity of fuel products imported.

For illustrative purposes, assume that a commodity (Product X) is charged an excise duty of \$2.00 per gallon. The price of Product X is \$5.00 per gallon and someone purchases 100 gallons. The pre-tax value is \$500 (= \$5.00 x 100 gallons). The excise adds \$200 (= \$2.00 x 100 gallons) for



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