

Reporter

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GOB to present legislation to punish price gouging offenders

By Javam Flowers

The Government will take legislative and enforcement measures to punish “price gouging offenders,” this week’s Cabinet Brief announced.

The release states, “With a view to address the rising cost of living and in the interest of protection of consumers ... measures shall be taken on a prompt basis to punish price gouging offenders with strict fines per violation through a ticketing system.”

The brief explained that the government will implement a public reporting system via which consumers can report instances



Pg. 3

BTL to review SOP following technician's fatal fall

Pg. 4



Technician Edwin Sho

Mixed reviews on mandatory travel insurance

Pg.



BTLA's Stewart Krohn



BHA President Alina Saldivar

By Michelle Sutherland

There continue to be mixed reviews about this week's rollout of

the mandatory Belize Travel Insurance for tourist, as stakeholders have expressed concerns

about the additional cost on visitors, and the blacklogs at the airport.

On Wednesday,

Belize Hotel Association (BHA) President Alina Saldivar told The Reporter that the airlines and



Ah- Sarry!

Dear Editor,

If I do something bad to achieve some good or other, am I justified?

Check this out. Anytime you or me, or anybody do something, anything; you do it because you see the result as good for yourself or others. Philosophical moralists would succinctly express this as: the human will is capable of promoting only what it sees as good. Does this not tell us that all of us humans are basically good but often we are deceived, or deceive ourselves by accepting what is BAD as GOOD? This is why wholesome Germans were able to overlook the senseless holocausting of millions of Jews!

Did the Nuremburg Trials of Nazi leaders really convince the leaders of the world and the rest of us human beings that the mass killings of innocent humans must be soundly condemned as CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY?

And why is it that the United Nations, founded by the powerful victorious countries after World War II; not given notice that those scientists... and the nation who sponsored their release of viruses... Why has the UN not announced to the world that the perpetrators of this world pandemic shall be called to account?!

My guesstimate is that Hitler and his associates were responsible for the death of fifty millions. Don't you think that the deaths caused by COVID may top one hundred millions?

Why hasn't the UN issued a warning?

The international community usually pays no attention to little squeaky voices. Pity! Because the little voice may be used by HIM whose voice is all

powerful.

The voice of the Almighty often through what we call CONSCIENCE informs us that we always cause our own problems, because we take too lightly the warnings of the DECALOGUE. One of these warns us about the misuse and abuse of the most sacred, most beautiful gift of copying ourselves through a relation with another person. Intended for the promotion and protection of family, we have used it for pleasure mostly.

A person with judicial experience has told me that the incident (the recent scandal) was caused by PROVOCATION. Therefore any criminal charge would be dismissed by a court of law.

My personal, humble opinion is that we will see a reduction of DOMESTIC VIOLENCE when our men and our women start to have greater respect and love for the beautiful gift of sexual expression.

Sorry, I don't want to slide into preaching being a sinner myself, I sympathize with those who disrespect this most beautiful gift of sexual expression!

Finally, may I remind our virgins that domestic violence will shrink when their legs are uncrossed only by a ring on their finger!

Ah sorry fu be a little preachy, but there is no other way to cure DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

When a person allows you to be intimate that is not a license to think: take me and use me as you wish, for I belong to you and you can use me as you wish. NO!

Sincerely: Paul Rodriguez

Another Case of Police Brutality Lands Mental Health Patient in the Hospital

By Michelle Sutherland

Reports of excessive use of police force have re-emerged from time to time in the public, but it is perhaps the first time that an individual has landed in the Emergency ward at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital with as many as 100 pellet wounds from rubber bullets that were fired by a team of police officers as they scrambled to detain him.

The family of Joshua Smith, 26, claimed that on Saturday, February 12th, they had made the initial call for assistance from the officers to go to their home on East Collett Canal in Belize City and detain Smith, who they say had no known mental health condition, but on that specific day had been acting out of control. The family claimed that when they arrived home Smith had blood on his body and had a knife and a hammer in his hands. However, they said that he was not attacking anyone and so they decided to make the call for assistance. A call which they have now come to regret since their loved one is possibly blind, bedridden, and has several rubber pellets lodge in his body and face.

"It is inhumane. His entire face is in one. He can't see at this time, and they can't tell me if he will be able to see again, until after 14 days when the swelling goes down. But his whole face is bleeding, his whole stomach area. He's still bleeding and vomiting, and I think something is wrong. So, I told the nurses that they need to do an ultrasound and a cat scan because there are still bullets in his head, and in his lips because I can't see them," said the victim's mother Lara Smith.

Smith claimed that when she had called, one police mobile had responded, and when they requested that her son put down the weapons and he did not comply they radioed in for backup, and that is when three more police mobile responded. While Smith said that the officers were initially instructed to

shoot with rubber bullets and to aim below Smith's knee, she said that they just kept on shooting at her son, aiming for wherever they could injure him and when he refused to put down the weapons, they opted to use a wooden door as a shield to approach him and disarm him.

But even as the family is now grappling with watching their bedridden loved one on a hospital bed, in an interview with Channel 7 News the Commissioner of Police Chester Williams said that he has always been reluctant to send out his officers to address situations where mental health patients are involved. In fact, according to the Commissioner, the officers had gone in contravention of the department's policy by responding to the call on their own as opposed to being accompanied by personnel from the Ministry of Health.

The Professional Standards Branch has also commenced their investigation into the officer's behavior.

THE REPORTER

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On the third day of mourning, the government and people of Belize said farewell to Prime Minister emeritus, Manual Esquivel, honoring his cremated remains with a guard of honor, a 21 gun salute and a cultural presentation which included music contemporary and classical.

It was an effusive outpouring of affection and respect for the man who became Belize's second Prime Minister in succession to the charismatic and wildly popular leader, George Cadle Price, our Prime Minister of Independence.

Mr. Esquivel took over as Prime Minister in December 1984, at a critical time in Belize's history, breaking the dominance of the People's United Party, in power for more than two decades - since 1961 when Belize achieved self-government.

Over those 23 years the political mood in Belize had turned from euphoria to disillusionment as the government shuddered under the impact of powerful self-serving ministers on whose judgement the aging Prime Minister relied for support and leadership.

Under the banner of the United Democratic Party Prime Minister Esquivel re-defined Belize's priorities: a stable economy grounded on a working two-party parliamentary system, with respect for the opposition and a steely resolve to keep the economy of this small and vulnerable nation afloat.

The enduring success of Mr. Esquivel's influence as two-time Prime Minister is that politics became respectable under his tenure and the electorate more discerning and sophisticated. Under his influence, cronyism and insider trading were rooted out of the system and the country bounced back, gaining small but significant surpluses and a huge reservoir of international respect and goodwill.

The austerity which Prime Minister Esquivel imposed led eventually to a turning-away after he sacked a bunch of surplus public officers just weeks before Christmas. The move cost him the next elections, and ushered in an era of patronage the likes of which was never seen before.

But the memory of the Prime Minister's virtues has endured, and the example he set has not been forgotten. In the paean of praise following his death his honesty and integrity have been the most admired, the most lauded, even among those who did not follow his example.

Ten years of public life has borne fruit, and future generations of leaders now have a blueprint for success.

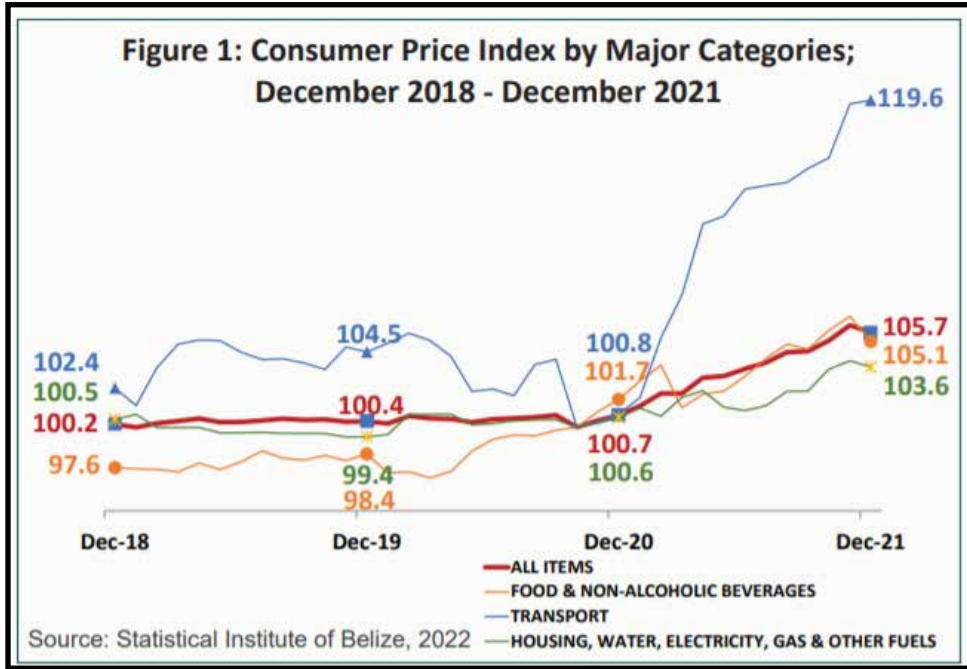
Lives of great men
all remind us

We can make our lives sublime.
And departing leave behind us
Footprints in the sands of time.

- the poet Longfellow

GOB to present legislation...

Managing Climate Change migration



Cont'd from pg. 1
of overpricing of controlled items. "Cabinet will also consider other protection and relief mechanisms, especially for essential items, as it continues to closely monitor price movements," the release added.

According to the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB), aggregate price levels for 'Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages' saw an overall increase of 3.4% for the month of December 2021. Overall consumer prices (all items) climbed by 4.9%.

There have been several factors contributing to heightened prices. These include supply constraints and the impact of increasing world market prices for fuel products, as well as inflationary pressures in source markets for Belize's imports.



By William Ysaguirre

Belize has been receiving migrants displaced by the impacts of Climate change for over 40 years, and is now developing a coherent plan to manage such migration, with the support of United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM) which has local office in Belize.

The IOM's Migration and Climate Change Program is supporting the project: "Building Capacities of the Government of Belize to Address the Challenges Associated with Migration and Climate Change." The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change & Disaster Risk Management is implementing the project, through the National Climate Change Office (NCCO). To this end, the NCCO held a training workshop for

officials of all government agencies which provide services to migrants, at the Twin Palms Inn in Belmopan last Wednesday to Friday, February 9-11.

Belize is party to several international treaties and conventions, and so the government has an obligation to protect the human and legal rights of migrants. This also means providing services such as schools, health care facilities, a potable water supply and transportation for these people to have a decent way of life. The objective is to improve the management of migration in Belize by giving the relevant officials an improved understanding of how residents of coastal communities may move due to Climate Change and natural hazards that they might respond better.

The training began by defining what are migrants: That is, people who have crossed state or international boundaries seeking a better way of life, regardless of their legal status and whether they moved willingly or not. Climate refugees are people who have seen their way of life disappear or destroyed by the impacts of Climate Change, they may have seen their homes inundated by sea level rise, or their once fertile farmlands turn into a parched desert. Whatever the reason, these migrants have come to Belize in the hopes of making a fresh start.

Not all migrants come from outside our borders, as almost half the population lives within six miles of the coast, as much of activities

along the coast drives much of the economy, such as the tourism and fishing sectors. Belize's vulnerability to hurricanes means almost all people living along the coast will experience a storm evacuation at some point in their lives.

The 14 major hurricanes Belize experienced from 1931 to 2010 caused tremendous damage to the farmers and the tourism sector. The coastal lowlands are also prone to flooding, whether from hurricane storm surge or from the torrential rains associated with a storm, which can affect even the people living in the interior near the Western border. A lot of Belize's major public buildings, hospitals, businesses and major highways are located on or near the coast, making them vulnerable to sea level rise. Some villages have seen their beaches washed away by coastal erosion to the point that buildings that were once on dry land have fallen into the sea and become uninhabitable shells.

Sometimes it's too much rain; sometimes it's too little, as many farmers have also suffered during droughts. Many have had their lives uprooted by floods. Some migrants are economic refugees, crossing the border to find work in our farming sector, harvesting sugarcane, bananas, oranges, or shrimp. As poor as we imagine ourselves to be, people from other countries see Belize as the land of opportunity, the chance of a better life that has disappeared in their country of origin.

RF&G LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

Date: February 15, 2022

Bruce Sanchez of *Isabella Bank Village, Belize District, Belize C.A.* having made written declaration that Policy A3103219 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 OF DISSOLUTION

1. **Yellow Lab Inc.**
2. **Algo Solution Ltd.**
3. **RBG & ASOCIADOS (Belize) Corp**

Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that the above listed companies have been dissolved and struck off the International Business Companies Register on **February 3rd, 2022.**

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BTL to review SOP following technician's fatal fall

By Michelle Sutherland

Belize Telemedia Limited (BTL) is reportedly wrapping up their investigation into the unfortunate incident involving their employee Edwin Sho, who tragically lost his life earlier this week after he fell to his death from off of a utility pole in Roaring Creek Village.

While we were made to understand that the company is still in the process of compiling statements from witnesses on the ground as well as talking to Sho's coworker who was with him at the time of the incident, they are also following up with Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) and the Belize Police Department, both of whom have also launched a parallel investigation into the matter.

Kendra Santos, the chief human resource officer at BTL, told the Reporter on Thursday that while they are still awaiting the outcome of those two other investigations their priority this week is to get all facts in so that they can go over them and eventually close the investigation. That will allow them to officially commence a complete review of their Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), in an effort to ensure that such tragedy does not reoccur.

"A company of our size routinely looks at and I know that BEL as well will look at SOP as we move forward. We have a procedural manual like any other company and every year we take the opportunity to look and review it. Even outside of this unfortunate incident this would have been something that in a few months we would have reviewed anyway. Nobody can deny that given that this tragic incident has happened that we need to ensure that we conduct the review as a matter

of priority. So as a matter of urgency we will now look at what we have in place to see if there are any opportunities for us to enhance what we have. We wouldn't have a tragic accident like this and just sit on our hands and think that everything that we have in place is airtight, so I know that we are going to look at it very soon," explained Santos.

Since the incident, Santos said that the BEL's safety personnel have met with the company to discuss the matter. Additionally, Santos said that the company has also been providing support for Sho's coworkers and have also met with the family personally to discuss with them and to offer their support moving forward. Santos said that an incident such as this one has never happened before in the history of the company and has come as a shock to everyone.

When we asked her whether it was standard procedures for the employees to use a ladder to climb the utility post, she confirm that it was "normal," however, they are attempting to find out what went wrong procedurally, and what had happened between the time that Sho and another coworker had been dispatched to the village to conduct an installation at a customer's home based on a service request.

"It seems as though we are not getting a very clear answer so far as to what happened. Everybody is hearing that there was a loud noise and then would have witnessed the aftermath. So we are trying to close the gap, to be honest as to precisely what happened when the guys were deployed to close the service request to the point where everybody heard this loud noise with him and the lampost hitting the ground. So I think that is why everybody is trying to be very diligent with time and who witness what instead of

making a lot of assumptions," noted Santos.

For context, the two utility companies reportedly have an agreement with each other that BTL uses the utility poles to run their cables and in return pays a fee to BEL for that service. Sho who had been working with the company since 2017 as a service operations and maintenance technician had reportedly gone to the village to carry out an installation. However, credible sources say that when he climbed the utility pole, it snapped in half and he fell to the ground where he died instantly.

One witness, identified as Jason Twist, who was at the scene, said that there was no way to tell that the post was rotten and that it had snapped from the bottom. Twist said that when he went to inspect the post, he found out that it was hollow inside.



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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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

Position Name: Maintenance Mechanic (Generator Mechanic)

Vacancy number: Belmopan-2022-03-R

Closing date: February 25th, 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.

Notice of Dissolution

"Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that YOO DEVELOPMENT LTD. a Company incorporated under the IBC Act of Belize commenced dissolution on February 14th, 2022.

And

Paraskevas Zacharoulis with address of 20A Agiou Athanasiou, P.C. 7102, Aradippou, Larnaca, Cyprus is the Liquidator, and any claims against this Company should be forwarded to the liquidator within 30 days from commencement."

Interconsult Belize Limited
Registered Agent

Elito Arceo wins BAS' James A. Waight award

By William Ysaguirre

San Pedro environmental activist and advocate Jose Elito Arceo has won this year's James A. Waight award from the Belize Audubon Society, which bestows this annual award in recognition of outstanding work in environmental conservation.

BAS Director Amanda Burgos-Acosta announced the winner of the award via a virtual award ceremony on Wednesday evening.

Arceo becomes the 36th recipient of this most prestigious award for conservation work in Belize, named in honor of BAS founder James Aloysius Waight, who helped establish the Belize Audu-

bon society 53 years ago, along with a few like-minded contemporaries. The award was begun 1987, and the Society presents the award each year on James Waight's birthday, February 16.

Arceo, a professional fisherman and tour operator, has led the charge of many conservation drives over the years to preserve the pristine natural beauty of his birthplace, San Pedro Ambergris Caye, and its adjacent marine ecosystems. When a marine survey ship sailed into Belizean waters to do a sonic survey of subterranean strata of the sea outside the Belize Barrier Reef, which was a precursor to identify possible locations for under-



Elito Arceo wins James Waight award

ground petroleum deposits, he became one of its most outspoken opponents. He organized local fishermen and tourism stakeholders who were adamantly against offshore

petroleum exploration or development in Belizean waters. They clamored to the government until the survey was abandoned and the ship departed Belizean waters. He was equally vocal against any resort development which might threaten the offshore fishing flats, where local tour operators take their guests for catch and release fly-fishing.

More recently, Arceo has organized beach clean-up drives to remove the scourge of the red, foul-smelling sargassum weed floating off the Atlantic. He also worked to raise sanpedranos' awareness to protect turtle nesting sites

along the island's beaches, along with 1998 recipient of the award, Greg Smith, known locally as the "Turtle Man". Smith nominated Arceo for the award, and Miguel Alamilla, the former director of the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, supported the nomination, for he was a lifelong friend of Arceo and knew how passionate he was about preserving the environment of his island home.

James A. Waight was a professional surveyor who began as an apprentice surveyor in colonial British Honduras when he was only 18, and he traveled the length and breadth of Belize in a time when there were few roads, and most journeys involved a boat ride by sea or river to the nearest village to your destination, and a horseback ride or trekking in on foot

to complete the trip. He was a part of the British survey expedition in the early 1920's to establish Belize's territorial boundaries from Gracias a Dios to Garbutt's Falls. Two teams conducted the survey, one working from each end. Waight was with the team, which started out from the north, and 18 months later, the two teams met up. In a time before Geographic Positioning Satellite systems, their survey was so accurate that they were within 20 feet of each other.

His work and his travels led him to appreciate Belize's natural wealth, and he decided its beauty must be preserved, which is why he established the BAS, which first began as a chapter of the Florida Audubon Society before it became an autonomous chapter in its own right. He served as its first president from 1969 to 1986. His work was recognized by Queen Elizabeth II, first as a Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE), and then as an Officer of the order (OBE), an honor he received at Buckingham Palace in 1967, in the presence of his wife and two of his children. He and his wife Irene Price-Waight also helped draft Belize's first Environmental Protection Act in 1992.

Team from Human Life International to Visit Belize

The Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize, in collaboration with Seed of life Pregnancy Resource Center, welcomes to Belize a High Level Team from Human Life International from Feb. 21th-25th.

Seed of Life Pregnancy Resource Center is the official representative in Belize of Human Life International.

Human Life Inter-

national is the largest pro-life, pro-family and pro woman organization in the world with affiliates and associations in over 100 countries. The organization focuses on building and sustaining a culture of life by valuing life at every stage from conception to Natural Death, preserving the dignity of the human person, and teaching the world to follow

God's Plan for the Family.

The organization is a Catholic Apostolate and carries forth its mission around the world through education, outreach, advocacy and service. During their visit to Belize, the team is expected to hold several meetings with various bodies of influence from a cross section of our Belizean Society.



MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND INVESTMENT

GAMING CONTROL BOARD NOTICE

The Gaming Control Board of Belize would like to remind all gaming machine licensees that their licenses will expire on 31st March 2022. Licensees wishing to renew their licenses are asked to submit their original application forms to the Ministry of Investment, situated at No.46 Nanche Street in Belmopan on or before Monday, February 28th, 2022. Application forms are available at the Ministry.

We can be contacted via:

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

Email: belizeinvestment@invest.gov.bz

Facebook: Investment, Policy & Compliance Unit

*Keep Calm
and
Read*



The Reporter

Half of Arriving Visitors Did Not Purchase Health Insurance, Leading to Snaking Lines at the PGIA

By Michelle Sutherland



Director of Tourism Evan Tillett

Director of Tourism for the Belize Tourism Board, Evan Tillett, in commenting on the huge backlog of passengers at the entrance of the arrival gate to the Phillip Goldson International Airport, confirmed that half of the arriving passengers did not purchase their travel insurance prior to arriving in the country and thereby causing the snaking lines at the airport.

Tillett, who is out of the country, additionally told the Reporter that while the online portal, where visitors could purchase the Belize Travel Insurance online was only launched on February 7th, he believed that it was sufficient time for tourist to have made their purchase prior to their arrival at the airport.

“Today, more people are you coming in with the insurance already purchase. We expect the people who have not purchased in advance to go down. Signage will also increase and be armed with QR Codes for the visitors to download and purchase the insurance in addition

to the kiosk and the concierge people,” commented Tillett on Wednesday, when asked how the Ministry will address the situation.

Additionally, Tillett said that the BTB has mobilized yet another extensive campaign via their international agencies to promote this new program and its requirements. They are also continuing to work closely with hotel and airline partners to recommend purchasing the insurance policy online prior to travel to expedite entry.

“In any new program that involves entry requirements

to a country, growing pains are a normal process of implementation. That being said we are working with the Insurance provider, the Airport, and our partners in the industry to refine the systems in place to address concerns of queuing,” reiterated Tillett.

On Tuesday visitors were met with Snaking lines that stretched for several feet at the entrance of the arrival gate to the airport, as they disembarked from their respective flights, and joined the crowds of travelers who lined up to purchased their mandatory travel health insurance so

that they could be officially cleared for entry into the country.

The Belize Travel Insurance which had only become effective on that same day was being blamed for causing the backlog for hundreds of travelers who had to manually go through the painstaking process, despite it being offered online at <https://www.belize-travel-insurance.com>.

While sources say that the surge in travelers was only from one flight, there are already concerns of how the process will work out ahead of the expected increase in travelers for the

weekend where 19 flights are expected to arrive in the country.

One traveler identified as Dale Dion, who spoke to Love News on Tuesday, indicated, “At first, I was very frustrated, [and] very upset. Now, I had someone that told me about it at the previous airport, so I was kind of ready for it. The thing that was probably the most frustrating was having to go from one place to another place, to another place. In the end, I am ok with it and I felt bad that I got frustrated because I

mean I understand it but with all the other COVID restrictions it can be frustrating.”

The majority of the tourist, who was at the airport on Tuesday, while saying that the insurance policy was an added expense to them, agreed that the US \$18 price tag was affordable and that it was also useful and important in a COVID era. They, however, also said that the purchasing process could benefit from some tweaking to afford ease of access and the free flow of passengers through the airport.



Oración al Espíritu Santo

Espíritu Santo. Tú que me aclaras todo, que iluminas todo mis caminos para yo alcance mi ideal; tú que das el don divino de perdonar y olvidar el mal que me hacen y que en todos los instantes de mi vida estas conmigo, yo quiero en este corto diálogo agradecerte por todo y confirmar una vez más que nunca quiero separarme de ti, por mayor que sea la ilusión material! Deseo estar contigo y todos mis seres queridos por tu misericordia para estar conmigo y los míos. (La persona debera rezar esta oración 3 días seguidos sin decir el pedido. Dentro de tres días será difícil que sea. Publicar en cuando se reciba la gracia.

Gracias Espíritu Santo.

R.M.L.

S U D O K U

Medium Puzzle

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

Answer to Puzzle

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

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.

“Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future”

By Javan Flowers

The Ministry of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation (MBECA) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) announced this week that after much deliberation, the Belizean public has selected “Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future” to be the name of the new conservation fund.

The fund is established as part of Belize’s historic Blue Bond agreement. Accordingly, the public was invited to vote electronically via a link shared widely on social media and email by the MBECA, TNC, and their partners. Persons participating in the electronic poll were asked to choose the one that best captures the purpose and significance of the fund from

among three shortlisted names. The winning name, “Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future,” obtained 52% of the votes.

Those who participated in the naming competition were invited to register their names to win one of two prizes. The two lucky winners selected during the LIVE Name Reveal event were Maria Tepaz of the Cayo District and Ernesto

Thimbriel of Belmopan.

Each winner received accommodations for four in San Pedro where they will enjoy a snorkeling tour at the Hol Chan Marine Reserve.

The debt conversion agreement between the Government of Belize and TNC, under TNC’s “Blue Bonds for Ocean Conservation” program, is the world’s most signifi-

cant debt restructuring for marine conservation to date. It has allowed Belize to restructure its “Superbond” and provide much-needed debt relief while simultaneously generating over US\$84 million for marine conservation over the next 20 years.

An additional estimated US \$92 million will be available by 2041 in an endowment, which will support Belize’s commitment to

protecting 30% of its marine and coastal environments.

The release ends by highlighting that the process of legally establishing the Belize Fund for a Sustainable Future is now underway, and the Government of Belize and TNC have committed to engaging with Belizean stakeholders throughout this process.



PRESS RELEASE

Migration of Belize Bank Corporation Limited (BBCL) to Belize Bank Limited (BBL)

February 15, 2022, Belize City, Belize: The Belize Bank Limited (BBL) is proud to officially announce that the migration of the former Belize Bank Corporation Limited (BBCL) will be finalized on February 28th, 2022. As a bank, we value customer experience and we assure you that this migration will result in significant enhancements specifically designed to benefit you, our valued customers and the communities in which we serve.

The combined entity will be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of its customers and offer a broader range of modern financial products and services with increased accessibility.

As BBL finalizes the migration of BBCL products and services, starting February 26th, 2022 through to February 28th, 2022 we hereby advise our BBCL customers that they will not have access to **online banking, debit card and in-branch services. The BBCL ATM network services will also be unavailable starting the morning of February 25th, 2022.** We kindly request that you make the necessary preparations prior to this time to ensure you have cash or E-kyash funds in your wallet.

We also advise customers to:

- Inform your employer of your new BBL account number in order for your payroll to be processed to that account after March 1st, 2022. **(Government of Belize employees, please note that your employer has been provided with your new account number.)**
- Inform persons/businesses transferring funds to you to use your new BBL account number effective March 1, 2022.

As of March 1st, 2022, former BBCL customers can look forward to the following:

- Being able to start using your new contactless BBL MasterCard debit card at merchants countrywide and access a wider network of offsite ATMs to meet our clients’ needs.
- Being able to log in to BBL’s mobile and online banking and use all the great features Belize Bank online has to offer.
- Access to E-smart accounts with overdraft protection and a wide range of modern financial products and services.

For more information, please contact us at 227-7132 or message us via WhatsApp at 613-0257 or visit our website www.belizebank.com to review our migration guide which was prepared especially for you.

As we continue to make every effort to ensure a smooth and successful transition, and embrace the opportunities that lie ahead, we thank all our customers that continue to make us the financial services provider of choice. To all our new and future customers, welcome to the Belize Bank Family! Please enjoy our lower fees and excellent customer service.

No Excuses

Expect No Sympathy

Sedi Elrington

The news that the Port of Belize is suing the Christian Workers Union and some of its officials for one million dollars in damages is not good. Neither the Union nor the stevedores, which it represents, can afford to pay damages in the amount of one million dollars to the Port. And, they have no guarantee that they can successfully defend the suit.

Litigation in Belize is expensive. The Union and the officials sued will have to find money immediately to retain the best lawyers they can afford. Generally lawyer fees are notoriously exorbitant. Here in Belize, senior counsel fees for litigation start at one thousand dollars per hour. Junior council fees start at no less than five hundred dollars per hour. Foreign lawyers are much more expensive but they are in many cases much more experienced and, for some reason they are more successful at persuading our local judges than local counsels. Thus, just to retain a team of lawyers to represent them the Union and the other officials will have to come up in short order with thousands of dollars.

The Christian Workers Union have a long and honourable history of representing the interest of poor workers, and in particular, stevedores in Belize City. The job of the stevedore is to load and unload ships. The job requires little or no skill and little or no formal education. But it is very demanding physically. And it is not without danger. It primarily attracts poor, unskilled youth who hail predominantly from south side Belize City. The job has historically been dominated by a relatively small clique. Nepotism is rife! And most, if not all stevedores, possess minimal education. Despite its long years of existence the Christian Workers Union has struggled over the years with weak leadership and poor finances. And the fact that

our local Labour Laws have always been pro enterprise and anti-Labour have effectively helped to stymie its growth and development, and, of course, its power.

On the other hand the Port of Belize has tremendous financial backing, if not resources of its own. Its chief executive officer is a white man from the United Kingdom. He routinely retains the biggest and most politically influential law firm in our country to represent its interest. The Union can expect no sympathy from it!

Worldwide, litigation has now taken on the characteristics of gladiatorial battles. Belize is no exception. Rich and powerful litigants leave nothing to chance. They openly seek to weaponize the courts for their own ends. Their highly paid lawyers go to extreme lengths to guarantee victory in court.

Worldwide also as well as in the Caribbean and in our own country, there is growing concern that judges are susceptible to bribery and corruption. Indeed, one former Grenadian Director of Public Prosecutions, had contributed an article in two Caribbean newspapers in which he charged that judges of the Caribbean are susceptible to bribery and corruption and that there was evidence that that was occurring in Grenada as well as Guyana. On the basis of that allegation the former D.P.P argued that the Caribbean Court of Justice should not be established. And today, some 21 years after its establishment, only 4 of the 15 member states of CARICOM have acceded to its appellate jurisdiction. The citizens of the other 11 member states of CARICOM are fearful that the CCJ will not give the quality of justice that the Privy Council of the United Kingdom gives.

As a rule Courts of Law are presided over by persons who are supposed to be scrupulously honest, erudite and beyond reproach. Governments appreciate that judges are mere

mortals and are fallible. And, in an attempt to compensate for that reality, honest conscientious and patriotic government leaders usually go to great lengths to try to ensure that persons appointed to preside over their courts of law are erudite and of impeccable character and be-

The reality is that the rich and powerful are, in most cases, viewed as being much more equal than the poor and the powerless before our courts, in like manner in which the rich and the whites in all post-colonial countries are instinctively viewed as been better and more honest than the not so rich

yond reproach. But not all government leaders are honest, patriotic and conscientious. Not all of them desire to have judges of unblemished character and undoubted competence and integrity presiding over their country's courts. Many want judges whom they can influence and manipulate.

Additionally, the judiciaries of Caribbean countries suffer from other glaring weaknesses which tend to impair the quality of the justice they mete out. This fact was recently alluded to by the President of the Bar Association in her address at the opening of the new Belize Supreme Court judicial year on the 18th January. President Illiana Swift, stated in her address as follows: "There is growing concern by the Bar about the quality of judgments delivered. It is unfortunately becoming quite common for parties to receive judgments with little to no reasons and merely a repetition of the arguments made by Counsel and a statement as to which side statement was accepted. Party to litigation and most importantly the unsuccessful party should know why a judge arrived at a specific decision as is consistent with the rules of natural justice."

In truth the situation in our courts have deteriorated so badly that some senior lawyers no longer have any appetite for litigation. Not only do

judges fail to give reasons for their decisions, but they are also known to deliver judgments that are patently inconsistent with legal precedents that have been settled law for centuries. Some judges, in Trumpian fashion, curtly ignore authorities painstakingly researched, put together,

the powerless before our courts, in like manner in which the rich and the whites in all post-colonial countries are instinctively viewed as been better and more honest than the not so rich and the not so white. It therefore behooves the Christian Workers Union and its co-defendants to bear these realities of life in our post-colonial nation as they join battle with the mighty Port of Belize in court. Going to court today can be as risky as engaging in Russian Roulette.

The Union and the other defendants will definitely need help from the Belizean public. Now is none too soon for them to begin organizing to raise money to build up a hefty defence fund. The contribution of the Labour Unions to the birth and development of the Belizean nation has been priceless. Among other things they laid the foundation for the early success of the People's United Party which championed the Nationalist Movement leading to our Independence. And, over the years, they have provided tremendous support and benefits to the lowli-

est of black Belizean workers on the impoverished and neglected south side of Belize City. It would, therefore, be a shame and disgrace if Belizeans were to sit back and watch the Christian Workers Union run the risk of been made bankrupt, impotent and unable to continue the exemplary work it has been doing in our country, in consequence of the current litigation. It was the Courts which declared the young promising politician Derrick Aikman to be a bankrupt and pre maturely ended his political career. May God Bless his Soul.

Let not the Christian Workers Union suffer a similar faith. All Belizeans must join in solidarity with it in this the darkest moment in its existence to date.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily reflective of the newspaper's stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.

NOTICE OF COMMENCED DISSOLUTION

BARNRIO Corporation ("the Company")

"Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that BARNRIO Corporation a Company incorporated under the IBC Act of Belize commenced dissolution on 10th February 2022.

And

Mr. Ahmad Younis of Office 610, Opal Tower, Business Bay, Dubai-United Arab Emirates, is the liquidator of the company.

Frontier International Business Services Limited
Registered Agent

Notice of Dissolution

"Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that STRETTON HOLDINGS LIMITED a Company incorporated under the IBC Act of Belize commenced dissolution on February 14th, 2022.

And

Paraskevas Zacharoulis with address of 15, Agiou Pavlou, Ledra House, Agios Andreas, 1105, Nicosia, Cyprus is the Liquidator, and any claims against this Company should be forwarded to the liquidator within 30 days from commencement."

Interconsult Belize Limited
Registered Agent

BioNTech to deliver mobile vaccine labs to Africa

By Javan Flowers

Germany's BioNTech unveiled this week their mobile vaccine production units, aimed at bringing manufacturing to Africa.

In BioNTech's release, they explained that to improve vaccine supply in Africa, they have introduced their approach to establishing scalable vaccine production by developing and delivering mobile mRNA manufacturing facilities.

The manufacturing solution consists of one drug substance and one formulation module; each called a BioNTainer. This allows for mRNA vaccine production in bulk (mRNA manufacturing and formulation). At the same time, "fill-and-finish" will be taken over by local partners.

BioNTech further highlighted that each BioNTainer is a clean room that BioNTech



BioNTech's CEO Ugur Sahin

equips with state-of-the-art manufacturing solutions.

Together, two modules require 800 sqm of space and offer an estimated initial capacity of up to 50 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine each year.

The BioNTainer will also be equipped to manufacture other mRNA-based vaccines

calibrated to the needs of the African Union member states, including the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine BioNTech's investigational malaria and tuberculosis vaccines, if they are successfully developed, approved, and authorized by regulatory authorities.

They continued by highlighting that one of the most critical parts

of the manufacturing process is quality control, "which includes all necessary tests for each

finished vaccine batch."

The capacity can be scaled up by adding further modules and sites to the manufacturing network on the African continent. The first mRNA manufacturing facility by BioNTech in the African Union is expected to arrive in the second half of 2022. Manufacturing in the first BioNTainer is planned to commence approximately 12 months after the delivery of the modules to its final location in Africa.

This milestone in the fight against vaccine inequity follows the WHO's call for developed nations to do their part in fully funding the

Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator program and "ending the pandemic as a global health emergency."

Notably, Africa's total population rests at approximately 1.391 billion people. According to data made available by Our World in Data, Africa's inoculation rate has remained at 16.5% for the past six months. Unfortunately, this percentile represents only 225 million persons, leaving more than one billion people unvaccinated. Fortunately, this grandiose initiative by BioNTech is expected to boost Africa's rate of inoculation dramatically.

CDB Delegation Concludes Inaugural visit to Belize

By Javan Flowers

The inaugural visit of Dr. Gene Leon, the president of the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), and his delegation concluded this week.

Leon held discussions with the Prime Minister and Cabinet, the Central Bank of Belize, and engaged with private sector entities including the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Citrus Growers Association.

Notably, members of the delegation visited The Hub in Belize City, a community resource center constructed in the Lake Independence Area under the bank-funded Youth and Community Transformation Project; the Coastal Road Highway Upgrading Project; the Belmopan Polyclinic being built through the Social Investment Fund; and a display of equipment acquired under the first and second Road Safety projects.

Highlights of the mission were the launch of four projects to enhance trade. Two of which are financed by CDB and two through the European Union-funded Economic Partnership Agreement & CARICOM Single Market and Economy Standby Facility.

The projects focus on improving Belize's trade competitiveness to improve trade facili-



PM John Briceno and CDB's Dr. Gene Leon

tation. The first project aims to enhance Belize's capacity to facilitate trade and provide a comprehensive analysis of the time taken for goods to be processed through the Customs and Excise Department and the feasibility of establishing an electronic single window for trade in Belize.

The second project involves enhancing the national quality infrastructure by improving the Belize Bureau of Standards (BBS) processes.

The Belize Agricultural Health Authority will benefit from the third project, which will develop a risk-based sanitary and phytosanitary import and export control system. The final project, a grant to the Toledo Cacao Growers Association (TCGA), will assist the entity in developing its capacity to participate in the cacao-chocolate global value chain. A

tour of the BBS laboratories followed the launch.

The president expressed much satisfaction with the visit, highlighting the alignment between the vision of the new administration and the vision of the CDB. He spoke to the transformative potential of the Coastal Highway Upgrading Project in mobilizing trade and impacting lives. He continued by emphasizing the importance of transferring valuable skills such as those employed in creating the Xe'il clothing line to children and youth from a sustainability perspective.

The release concluded by expressing that the Government of Belize continues to view the CDB as an able and valuable partner in pursuing economic recovery and further national development to the benefit of all Belizeans.

Weh Wi Ga Fi Seh

Kip sayf fahn di vairos!
Kip op yu helt.

Mi Frayvrit Ting Dehn

Eena di Bileez Kriol langwij, yu wahn hyaa "frayvrit" fi di Kriol a di Ingish wod "favorite/ favourite." Di fos Ingish spelin da Amerikan Ingish spelin ahn di sekan wan da British Ingish spelin a disya wod. Wel, eena Kriol, da mosi oanli pipi weh now ga lat a Ingish eena dehn Kriol taakin hoo wahn seh dis az "fayvrit." Pipi tel wi seh dat di moas Kriol Kriol way da "frayvrit." Bot, wicheva yoo seh, wat da sohn a fi yoo frayvrit ting dehn? Dehnya sentens da fahn di Kriol dikshineri:

frayvrit *adj.* favourite. **Dat da Saiman frayvrit sang.** That is Simon's favourite song.

grong food *n.* ground food; any root vegetable or tuber type food. **Sweet**

pitayta ahn kasaava da mi frayvrit kain a grong food. Sweet potato and cassava are my favourite kinds of ground food. *See: bred kain, grong bikl.*

lemanayd lemonade; a carbonated soft drink, locally produced and available in a variety of fruit flavours. **Red lemanayd da mi frayvrit saaf jrink.** Red lemonade is my favourite soft drink. *See: saaf jrink.*

schrech-mi-gots *n.* taffy made from the water of the young coconut. **Wen Ah mi maal mi frayvrit sweet dami schrechmigots.** When I was small my favourite candy was taffy.

sojkek *n.* subject. **Maakos frayvrit sojkek da skool da mats.** Marcus favourite subject at school is math. *See: tapik.*

taat *n.* tart. **Mai frayvrit dezert da kuknat taat.** My favourite dessert is coconut tart.

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 **Vizit:** www.nationalkriolcouncil.org

Gang Violence Spillover Claims Life of Young Mother

By Michelle Sutherland

A young, 21-year-old mother was killed Saturday night in what appears to be a spillover of gang violence emanating from the Roaring Creek area.

The victim, Karina Andrews, a young mother of a one-year-old son, was fatally shot on Saturday night at the entrance of Belmopan City.

After reviewing surveillance footage from the area, police have managed to track down the white Honda SUV that is believed to have been used in carrying out the crime. They have since impounded that vehicle and have also detained two suspects for questioning in relation Andrews' murder. It is expected

that the cops will now move to lay charges of murder against those suspects, ahead of the weekend.

Speaking to the media on Monday, Commissioner of Police Chester Williams indicated that while Andrews' name is not new to the police, she was not known as a gang member. However, it could have been her affiliation with one of those groups that could have made her a target. While Williams confirmed that there is a possibility that Andrews could have been the intended target, he said that so could have the other occupants of the van with whom she was traveling.

"We do believe the motive is gang-related.

You will know that we have had a number of incidents in Roaring Creek involving the different groups. We had done some mediation and quelled it to some extent but it seems like it wants to rear its ugly head again and so we certainly are on the ground making sure we do what needs to be done to avert any possible retaliation," said Williams.

Prior to the fatal shooting Andrews and a group of friends were socializing at a well-known establishment in Belmopan City when around 11:30 p.m. on Saturday, February 12th, they reportedly left that establishment

after observing that someone was closely monitoring their movement.

Andrews reportedly left the establishment along with six others in a white van and were reportedly crossing the pedestrian bump near the entrance to Belmopan City, when they reportedly observed the same person tailing them in a white Honda SUV. As the group slowed down at the bump, someone from inside the white SUV reportedly let out a barrage of shots at the van, fatally injuring Andrews and resulting in injuries to two others.

Family members of



Karina Andrews

Andrews said that she had only moved from Dangriga to live in Belmopan a couple of months ago to take up a job offer at a boutique so that she could be closer to her common-law husband. On that particular night, family members say that Andrews had insisted that

she wanted to go out despite her common-law husband telling her not to. She eventually ended up going and was hitching a ride back home when she met her demise.

Investigators later reported recovering as many as 12 expended shells from the scene.

Single-use plastics to be made illegal by the end of the month



By Javan Flowers

The sale of single-use plastics will be officially illegal in Belize as of the end of February, a release from the Department of the Environment (DOE) announced this week.

DOE informed the public that the amended environmental protection regulations will bar businesses, establishments, and persons from selling single-use plastics as of February 28, 2022.

The statement follows that the importation of single-use plastics, as defined in the regulations, has been strictly prohibited since April 15, 2020, and the prohibited product manufacturing as defined in the regulations should have ceased on January 31st, 2022.

According to the amendment, "in consideration of the date to cease production of prohibited products and the resulting stockpiles that may arise, no business, establishment or person shall sell these products commencing February 28, 2022." It continues, "Finally, no person, business, or entity shall possess these prohibited items as of March 31, 2022."

The release further highlights that any person, business, or entity in contravention of these regulations commits an offense and is liable to summary conviction as outlined in the relevant sub-regulations – which sees fines as high as bzd\$20,000 and or up to six months imprisonment.

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
- Critical and analytical thinking
- High cognitive ability
- Technology cognizance
- Persistence, resilience, stress tolerance, flexibility and adaptability
- Assertive and decisive
- Visionary and inspiring
- Coaching and mentoring
- High integrity

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:

jobapplications@portofbelize.com

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

Tropic Air flies direct to El Salvador



Tropic is now flying to San Salvador

By William Ysaguirre

Tropic Air has been flying in Belize for 43 years, and has now extended its international service to San Salvador, with its inaugural flight from the Philip Goldson International Airport last Friday afternoon, February 11.

Minister of Tourism

and Diaspora Relations Hon. Anthony Mahler welcomed the new service as another important milestone for the industry, which will help to build up Belize's overnight tourism, as the sector struggles to recover from the COVID pandemic over the last

two years.

"Air traffic into Belize is critical and it's the lifeblood of the tourism industry for us," Minister Mahler said. "We will continue to focus on building air routes into our country and having more people come to the destination. That is the only way we can improve the quality of living for our

people and growing our GDP and having people meaningfully participate in the industry."

John Grief III, the grandson of the airline's founder, and Minister of Blue Economy and Civil Aviation Hon. Andre Perez were also present for the launch ceremony and joined Minister Mahler in cutting the cake and a

champagne toast. Grief then welcomed BTB Director Evan Tillett and other invited guests onto the flight.

The Beechcraft 1900 twin-engine turboprop took little over an hour and 10 minutes to fly its 19 passengers to El Salvador, where a similar ceremony was held with Salvadoran government officials. The service will be operated by a 14-seater Cessna Caravan 208B,

three times a week; the one-way fare is USD\$99.00.

Tropic Air also flies to Cancun, Quintana Roo, to Flores, Petén for tourists wishing to visit Tikal, and to San Pedro Sula and the island of Roatan in Honduras. Tropic's Director of Operations Ravei Nuñez noted that these connections bring value to the business, for family, and vacation travelers.

HRCB chastised court's decision to strip breastfeeding baby from mother

By Michelle Sutherland

A recent decision taken by the Family Court to grant interim access to a father of a 10-month child for weekend visits, thereby, interrupting the child's breastfeeding schedule, has prompted the Human Rights Commission of Belize (HRCB) to write a letter to the Family Court, expressing their discontent with that decision.

The HRCB in their letter to Madam Chief Justice Michelle Arana, dated February 8th, informed that they were concerned about the reports that had made their way on several social media platforms and incited major public discussion and concerns for the child and its mother Lorena Zaldana Chilin.

The HRCB said, "The Commission brings this matter to your attention because we believe that human rights principles are involved, and consideration needs to be given to whether they are being upheld. The child's welfare is of paramount concern and the breastfeeding issue is one which is an important factor in making court orders involving breastfeeding babies."

According to the HRCB, while the magistrate had ordered an interim order for the father to have custody of the child only for the weekend, the father had allegedly, and initially requested the visits to be for an entire week. However, according to the HRCB, after much deliberation, and what appeared to be a last-minute decision, having observed how distraught and upset the mother was the judge cut down on the

time frame.

Despite that "last-minute decision," the HRCB said that the most pressing issue was surrounding the 10-month-old baby and his access to breastfeeding, something which the mother argued is a vital part of the child's health since the child had a previous health condition that after many unsuccessful remedies was cured by the natural process of breastfeeding.

The HRCB letter then went on to say that while the mother does not object to the father having access to his child, she would have preferred the magistrate to take into consideration the child's age and how the decision could impact the child's health at such a critical juncture. The mother further suggested that she could have custody of the baby at night and return him to the father during the daytime.

The situation was first publicized on social media a couple of weeks ago by Chilin herself, who wrote in detail how she was coping with the court's decision to strip away her son from her and award joint custody with his father for a weekend visit despite the child still breastfeeding. Chilin said that she found it utterly outrageous that after carrying her son for nine months, enduring hours of labor pain, and staying up hours after he was born to nurture him to now asking permission to feed and hold her son.

The Commission then closed off by asking the Chief Magistrate to look into the matter and to further ensure that matters are being done fairly and in accordance with the law.

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 the below described property. Sale currently running and will expire on Wednesday 23rd February 2022 at 10:30 am:



REGISTRATION SECTION
Society Hall

BLOCK
24

PARCEL
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

E-mail: kevinacas@yahoo.com

Facebook: Belize Auctions



CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

UPDATE OF THE NATIONAL CRUISE TOURISM POLICY

The Belize Tourism Board (BTB) is inviting Expressions of Interest (EOI) for a consultant to update the National Cruise Tourism Policy of Belize.

1. Minimum Qualification and Experience of Consultant:

- At least 5 years' experience in public policy development, public governance, tourism policy development, tourism development, cruise tourism, port destination management, economic, business management, or related fields.
- Proof of experience in similar or related projects locally and/or internationally, in countries of similar governance and development ecosystems.
- Proof of Experience in facilitating and carrying out national public consultations is a requirement, as well as proven experience in developing technical reports, studies, drafting policy, and policy-related documents.
- Minimum Academic Qualifications: Bachelor's Degree in Public Policy, Policy Development, Tourism Development, Sustainable Development, Economic, Business Development, Governance or related fields.



2. Application:

Interested persons should submit a proposal based on the terms of reference (accessible via contact below), complete with:

1. Full Curriculum Vitae (with two professional references);
2. Proposed work schedule and description of approach/ methodology for performing the assignment.
3. Demonstrated knowledge of skills in similar activities, and stakeholder participation techniques; as well as strong communication, documentation and presentation skills
4. A technical proposal should be submitted to include at minimum the proposed approach to be taken to execute the consultancy, evidence of stakeholder participation, indicative timeline and budget for completion.
5. Proposals should not exceed 10 pages in length (exclusive of CV and references).

SUBMIT ELECTRONICALLY TO:

- Mrs. Romy Rancharan
- romy.rancharan@belizetourismboard.org
- **Deadline: February 25th, 2022 at 5:00pm**
- Any questions please submit to romy.rancharan@belizetourismboard.org
- Labeled **Re: Consultancy to Update National Cruise Tourism Policy**

(PRESS RELEASE)



HARVEST CAYE CONSERVATION FOUNDATION DONATES BZD \$20,000.00 TOWARDS THE PROTECTION OF BELIZE'S WILDLIFE AND ENVIRONMENT

BELIZE CITY, BELIZE, Tuesday, February 15th, 2022: The Harvest Caye Conservation Foundation (HCCF), a non-governmental organization established in partnership with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. (NCLH) and its subsidiary company, Belize Island Holdings Limited (BIHL), is proud to announce it is matching passenger donations **dollar-for-dollar**, which will be provided to two organizations protecting the wildlife and environment in Belize.

Located off the coast of southern Belize, Harvest Caye is considered the Caribbean's premier resort-style destination. The HCCF was established in 2016 in partnership with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. and its subsidiary, Belize Island Holdings Ltd., as a non-governmental organization whose primary goal is to promote wildlife conservation. The HCCF is dedicated to working with other NGOs in Belize and overseeing advocacy and outreach work with schools and communities to promote conservation and awareness of threatened species. The donations announced today reflects HCCF's strong commitment to protect Belize's wildlife. Half of the proceeds went to **Friends for Conservation and Development**, an existing partner. In 2020, HCCF was pleased to support a conservation project in Belize proposed by Friends for Conservation and Development which funded the launch of an Anti-Poaching Unit in the Chiquibul National Park. The main objective was to safeguard the Scarlet Macaw population which was under direct threat from illegal poaching. Scarlet Macaws are listed as an endangered species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, with less than 350 estimated to live in the jungles of Belize. This project was very successful in intercepting and detaining poachers. A total of seven baby Scarlet Macaws were rescued, recovered and reintroduced back into the wild. With the additional funding of **BZD\$10,000.00** Friends for Conservation and Development will be able to improve the detection of threats to the macaw population and safeguard existing macaw nests starting this March.

The other half of the proceeds formalizes a new partnership with the **Belize Wildlife Referral Clinic (BWRC)**, a non-governmental organization that provides professional veterinary care for injured or sick wildlife in Belize. BWRC works closely with the **Forest Department** in responding to wildlife issues, providing the necessary medical care and rehabilitation. The clinic also provides veterinary care and checkups for the wild scarlet macaws chicks in the Chiquibul forest each year under close monitoring by the Forest Department and Friends for Conservation and Development. In the past, BWRC has provided basic animal health check-ups for the captive wildlife. The **BZD\$10,000.00** donation will support BWRC's efforts to provide the needed care and rehabilitation for Belize's wildlife.

HCCF is proud of its work to protect and promote wildlife conservation and is especially grateful for the support received by the Harvest Caye's visitors. To learn more about the Company's sustainability efforts, please see our inaugural .

About Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd.

Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd. (NYSE: NCLH) is a leading global cruise company which operates the **Norwegian Cruise Line, Oceania Cruises and Regent Seven Seas Cruises brands**. With a combined fleet of 28 ships with nearly 60,000 berths, these brands offer itineraries to more than 490 destinations worldwide. The Company has nine additional ships scheduled for delivery through 2027, comprising approximately 24,000 berths.



Belize Wildlife Referral Clinic (BWRC)



Friends for Conservation & Development (FCD)

Belize footballers win University scholarships

By William Ysaguirre

Through FFB's partnership with Prospect-2Player, Izon Gill has been awarded a Full Scholarship to pursue the NAIA program at University of North Western Ohio while participating in their Men's Soccer Program.

Izon will be pursuing his Associates degree in



Jonard Castillo won a scholarship for Bachelor's in Sports management



Jayda Brown won a scholarship for Master's degree in Criminal Justice.



Izon Gill won a full scholarship for Associates degree in Sports Management.

Sports Management. At 22 years, Izon has played with the Senior Men's National Team as a midfielder.

Another athlete who is no stranger is Belize's Senior Women's National team player and 2021 NAWL top goal scorer Jayda Brown. Last season, Jayda received the Golden Boots awarded after scoring 15 goals in the season. Jayda currently plays Center Forward with Jewel Fury FC. At 22 years, Jayda has completed her Bachelors degree and has officially committed to attending Campbellsville University in Kentucky where she will be doing a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice.


National Team player Michael Salazar has been signed to LA Galaxy of Los Angeles after being scouted at Belize's most recent game against Nicaragua. Worthy to note is that LA Galaxy is the most recognizable Major League Soccer (MLS) club.

Seventeen-year-old Jordan Casanova, of the National Under-20 football team, has been invited to try out with the USA's Major League Soccer club, Chicago Fire, at their CFFC training grounds in Bridgeview, Illinois.

Jordan Casanova of Corozal district has already played as central defense for the Belize Senior Men's team, as well as with the Belize U23 Men's National team, Belize U-20 Men's National team, Belize U-19 Men's National Team, Belize U-18 Men's National team, Belize U-17 Men's National team, Belize U-15 Men's National team, and is currently playing in the FFB Top League.



Michael Salazar signs with LA Galaxy.



Belize Water Services

Public Notice

Belize Water Services Limited (BWSL) hereby serves notice that in accordance with the Water Industry Act, Chapter 222, Revised Edition 2000, Section 15(3), the company has made an application to the PUC for modification to its Authorized Service Areas under the existing license granted to BWSL by the PUC on March 22, 2001.

Modification to Authorized Service Areas

BWS has applied to the PUC to modify the Authorized Service Areas as follows:

- 1. Orange Walk District Service Areas:**
To include: Chan Pine Ridge Village
Reasons for modification:
 - a. The Government of Belize requested that BWSL take over the Chan Pine Ridge Village water system.
 - b. BWS performed infrastructure works including installation of mains to connect to the Orange Walk Town system. This was completed in 2014.
- 2. Belize District Service Areas:**
To include: Gardenia and Biscayne Villages
Reasons for modification:
 - a. With the support of the Government of Belize, the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and BWSL entered into an agreement for the expansion of its water distribution network to the villages of Gardenia and Biscayne along the Philip Goldson Highway in the Belize District.
 - b. The agreement specifies that the systems and expansions constructed will be owned and operated by BWS upon completion of the project. The project was completed in 2015.
- 3. Stann Creek District Service Areas:**
To include: Sarawee Village
Reasons for modification:
 - a. With the support of the Government of Belize, the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and BWSL entered into an agreement for the expansion of its water distribution network to the village of Sarawee in the Stann Creek District.
 - b. The agreement specifies that the systems and expansions constructed will be owned and operated by BWS upon completion of the project. The project was completed in 2020.

License Availability:
The full text of the license granted to Belize Water Services Limited is available for viewing at the Belize Water Services Limited's website <https://bws.bz/media/BWS-License-Authorized-Service-Areas.pdf>

For more information regarding this or any other BWS
Release, please contact:
Corporate Communications at Tel: 222-4757 Ext. 1405 or 1408
or via e-mail at pr@bws.com.bz

BWS: Delivering Water and More...

Three Policy Priorities for a Robust Recovery

By Kristalina Georgieva

We must work together to end the pandemic, navigate monetary tightening and shift focus to fiscal sustainability.

When the Group of Twenty finance ministers and central bank governors gather in Jakarta, in person and virtually, this week, they can take inspiration from the Indonesian phrase, *gotong royong*, “working together to achieve a common goal. This spirit is more important than ever as countries are facing a tough obstacle course this year.

The good news is that **the global economic recovery continues, but its pace has moderated amid high uncertainty and rising risks.** Three weeks ago, we cut our global forecast to a still-healthy 4.4 percent for 2022, partly because of a reassessment of growth prospects in the United States and China.

Since then, economic indicators have continued to point to **weaker growth momentum**, due to the Omicron variant and persistent supply chain disruptions. Inflation readings have been higher than expected in many economies; financial markets remain volatile; and geopolitical tensions have sharply

between **G20 finance and health ministries** is essential to increasing resilience—both to potential new SARS-CoV-2 variants, and future pandemics that could pose systemic risks.

Ending the pandemic will also help address the scars from **economic long-COVID**. Think of the profound disruptions in many businesses and labor markets. And think of the cost to students worldwide, estimated at up to \$17 trillion over their lives due to learning losses, lower productivity, and employment disruptions.

School closures have been especially acute for students in emerging economies where educational attainment was much lower to begin with—threatening to compound the dangerous divergence among countries.

What can be done? Strong policy action. Scaling up social spending, reskilling programs, remedial training for teachers and tutoring for students will help economies get back on track and build resilience to future health and economic challenges.

Second, countries need to navigate the monetary tightening cycle

While there is **significant differentiation** across economies and high uncertainty going forward, inflation pressures have been building in many countries, calling for a withdrawal of monetary accommodation where necessary.

Going forward, it is important to calibrate policies to country circumstances. It means **withdrawal** of monetary accommodation in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, where labor markets are tight and inflation expectations are rising. Others, including the euro area, can afford to act more slowly, especially if the rise in inflation relates largely to energy prices. But they, too, should be ready to act if economic data warrants a faster policy pivot.

Of course, clear communication of any shift remains essential to safeguard financial stability at home and abroad. Some **emerging and developing economies** have already been forced to combat inflation by raising interest rates. And the policy pivot in advanced economies may require additional tightening across a wider range of nations. This would sharpen the already difficult trade-off countries face in taming inflation while supporting growth and employment.

So far, global financial conditions have remained relatively favorable, partly because of negative real interest rates in most G20 countries. But if these financial conditions tighten suddenly, emerging and developing countries must be ready for potential capital flow reversals.

To prepare for this, borrowers should **extend debt maturities** where feasible **now**, while containing a further buildup of foreign currency debts. When shocks do come, **flexible exchange rates** are important for absorbing them, in most cases, but they are not the only tool available.

In the event of high volatility, **foreign exchange interventions** may be appropriate, as Indonesia successfully did in 2020. **Capital flow management measures** may also be sensible in times of economic or financial crisis: think of Iceland in 2008 and Cyprus in 2013. And countries can take macroprudential measures to guard against risks in the non-bank financial sector or where property markets are surging. Of course, all these measures may still need to be combined with macroeconomic adjustments.

In other words, we need to ensure that all countries can move **safely** through the monetary tightening

cycle.

Third, countries need to shift their focus to fiscal sustainability

As countries emerge from the grip of the pandemic, they need to **carefully calibrate their fiscal policies**. It's easy to see why: extraordinary fiscal measures helped prevent another Great Depression, but they have also pushed up debt levels. In 2020, we observed the largest one-year debt surge since the second world war, with global debt—both public and private—rising to \$226 trillion.

For many countries, this means ensuring continued support for health systems and the most vulnerable, while reducing deficits and debt levels to meet their specific needs. For example, a faster scaling back of fiscal support is warranted in countries where the recovery is further ahead. This in turn will facilitate their shift in monetary policy by reducing demand and thus helping to contain inflationary pressures.

Others, especially in the developing world, face far more **difficult trade-offs**. Their fiscal firepower has been scarce throughout the crisis, which has left them with weaker recoveries and deeper scars from economic long-Covid. And they have little scope to prepare for a post-pandemic economy that is greener and more digital.

For example, the IMF last year described how green supply policies, including a 10-year public investment program, could raise annual global output by about 2 percent compared to the baseline on average over 2021-30.

All these policy actions can help us find a new modus vivendi for a more shock-prone world. But they may be hampered by debt. We estimate that about 60 percent of low-income countries are in or at high risk of debt distress, double 2015 levels. These and many other economies will need more domestic revenue mobilization, more grants and concessional financing, and more help to **deal with debt immediately**.

That includes reinvigorating the G-20 Common Framework for debt treatment. This should start with offering a standstill on debt service payments during the negotiation under the framework. Quicker and more efficient processes are needed, with clarity on the steps to go through, so that everyone knows the road ahead—from formation of creditor committees to an agreement on debt resolution. And make the framework available to a wider range of highly indebted countries.

The IMF's role

The IMF plays an important role in this area by providing macroeconomic frameworks and debt sustainability analyses. And we encourage greater **debt transparency**: by requesting greater disclosure of what a member country owes and to whom when it seeks IMF financing, and by working with our members through the IMF-World Bank Multi-Pronged Approach to debt vulnerability.

We also need to build on the historic allocation of Special Drawing Rights of \$650 billion. As well as holding the new SDRs as reserves, some members have already begun to put them to good use. For example: Nepal for vaccine imports; North Macedonia for health spending and pandemic lifelines; and Senegal to boost vaccine production capacity.

To magnify the impact of the allocation, we encourage channeling of new SDRs through our Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, which provides concessional financing to low-income countries, and the new Resilience and Sustainability Trust.

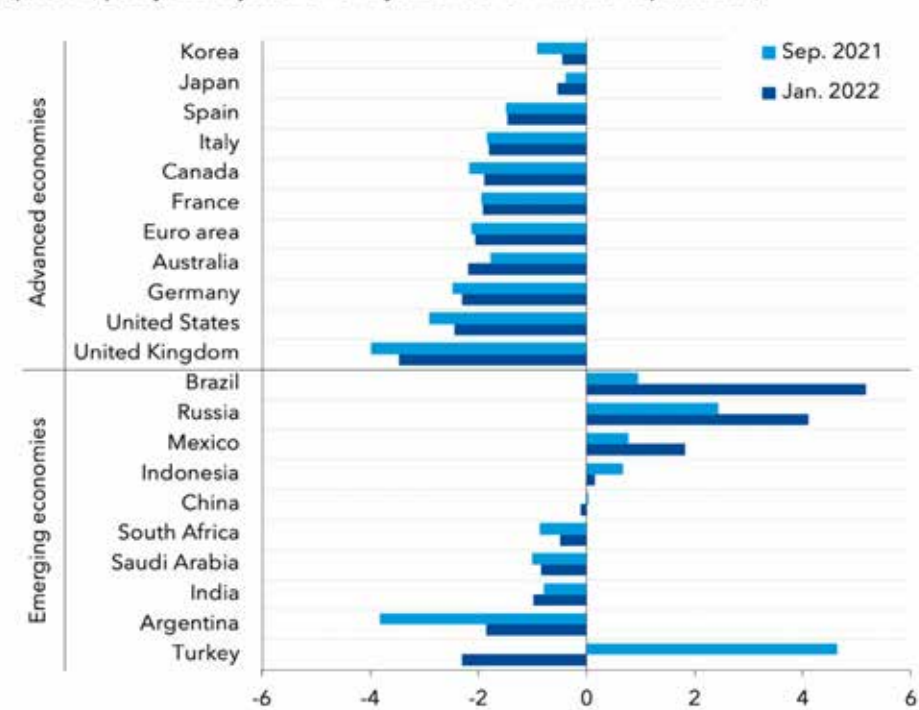
With its cheaper rates and longer maturities, the RST could fund climate, pandemic preparedness, and digitalization policies that would improve macroeconomic stability for decades to come. The G20 has given its strong backing to the RST, and we aim to have it fully operational this year.

As countries face up to multiple challenges, the IMF will support them with calibrated policy advice, capacity development, and financial assistance where needed. The key is to bring agility into all aspects of policymaking—but even that is not enough.

We also need to follow the spirit of Indonesia's motto, *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika*—“Unity in Diversity.” Together we can get through the obstacle course to a durable recovery that works for all.

G-20: Monetary policy real rates

(percent; policy rate adjusted for one-year ahead CPI inflation expectations)



Sources: Consensus Economics; Bloomberg, L.P.; Haver Analytics; and IMF staff calculations.
Note: The European Central Bank performs monetary policy for the euro area as a whole, including Germany, Spain, France, and Italy. China: 7-day reverse repo rate; euro area: deposit facility rate.

IMF

increased.

That is why we need **strong international cooperation and extraordinary agility**. For most countries, this means continuing to support growth and employment while keeping inflation under control and maintaining financial stability—all in the context of high debt levels.

Our new report to the G20 shows just how complex this obstacle course is and what policymakers can do to get through it. Let me highlight three priorities:

First, we need broader efforts to fight ‘economic long-Covid’

We project cumulative global output losses from the pandemic of nearly \$13.8 trillion through 2024. Omicron is the latest reminder that a durable and inclusive recovery is impossible while the pandemic continues.

But considerable uncertainty remains about the path of the virus post-Omicron, including the durability of protection offered by vaccines or prior infections, and the risk of new variants.

In this environment, our best defense is to move from a singular focus on **vaccines to ensuring each country has equitable access to a comprehensive COVID-19 toolkit** with vaccines, tests, and treatments. Keeping these tools updated as the virus evolves will require ongoing investments in medical research, disease surveillance, and health systems that reach the “last mile” into every community.

Upfront financing of \$23.4 billion to close the ACT-Accelerator funding gap will be an important down payment on distributing this dynamic toolkit everywhere. Going forward, enhanced coordination

**STARTING TODAY
I WILL _____, SO
THAT WHEN I'M _____
I CAN _____.
BRING IT ON 2022.**



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All about The People

The Passing of a Quite Giant



Neri Briceno

Right Honourable Dr. Manuel Esquivel, a young caller called to enquire about the infamous Head of Agreement fiascos.

The caller wanted to know what it was about because he did not particularly know the details or what it was about. He said he was younger, born in the 1980's after the Heads of Agreement and while he had heard about it, he was not aware what it was really about. In our engagement with the caller, to my surprise he knew ever little about our late two-time Prime Minister, the timeframe of when he was in office and what contributions he did to the nation of Belize. What immediately cross my mind, was what kind of history are we teaching our kids in school?

On May 9th, 2022, the island nation of

the Philippines will hold its General Elections. Pegged as a favourite to possibly win the presidency is Ferdinand Romualdez 'Bongbong' Marcus Jr. If the name sounds familiar, that is because he is the son of late Pilipino President, Ferdinand

We have lost a most upstanding person.

Marcus.

Sr. Marcus is infamously know as the strongman of the Philippines from 1965 to 1986, when he was ousted in a 'People's Power Movement'. His reign in power over the Philippines was characterized by a brutal oppressive regime, depravity of basic Human Rights, persecution of the opposition, suppression of freedom of speech and justice,

but more so by corruption. The Marcus' literally plundered the nation of the Philippines to the tune of between \$10-\$30 billion USD.

When the Presidential Palace was taken over after they fled to Hawaii, it was discovered that

his wife Imelda had over 3000 pairs of shoes, while some Philipinos barely had enough to eat. To this day if you tell anyone anywhere in the World that they have shoes like Imelda Marcus, they know what it means.

Interestingly enough, after all the damage that the Marcus' did to their nation, the family managed to return from exile after Ferdinand's death. Imelda was elected a senator and now his son can be the next president of the nation. People may ask how they managed to do this in just 36 short years.

The answer was to change the narrative. Imelda is now portrayed by her party as the mother of the nation and the gross theft that they undertook was painted to make it seem as though the wealth they plundered, was done so that the family could have kept it in some type of safe keeping for the people since the country was unstable after their departure. Never mind that most of that wealth has still not been returned to the nation. Additionally, what their propaganda machinery did, was to target young voters who were born after the revolution and hence have very limited real-life facts about what happened, except for what is fed to them on the internet. The result - a brilliant return to power.

That is the reason why I was shocked when this caller knew

almost nothing about the late Prime Minister Esquivel. It opens the door for a changing of the facts to a young population that were not around when Honourable Esquivel saved the nation from what would have surely been a catastrophe.

I met PM Esquivel at a very young age through my uncle who served as what I would believe was a Chief of Staff capacity. It was a quick casual meeting. I went to his office in Belmopan to visit him and while I was there the PM walked in. He introduced us, I shook his hand and he asked me a few questions mostly about what I was doing. I think I was in Sixth Form at the time. He made no lasting impression on me and am sure I made none on him.

Our paths would not cross again until over 20 years later, when I was working in the Oil & Gas Industry in Belize. The project that I was involved in, began under a PUP Administration and later when the UDP won, we had to deal with a new administration. It is safe to say that most of the politicians that I dealt with on both sides of the isle were more interested in what tangible benefits the project could offer to their constituency, their party and others, to them individually.

PM Esquivel was totally different in every way. His interest was more in how the project would benefit the country of Belize and also to ensure that GOB was getting its fair share of taxes. I remembered he peppered me with a million and one questions. But I went prepared because before the meeting, I had asked my uncle for advise on how to prepare for the meeting. His reply was that I should know everything detail about what I was

presenting because he would ask a lot of questions.

I must admit that I was taken aback when the time came. We exchanged basic pleasantries and it was down to business. At first, I found it him cold, but later realized that this was not the case.

As my encounters with him increased, I began to develop a deep respect and I must say, admiration for him. I realize that this man was about the nation and what was best for Belize and its people. There was never a suggestion of personal or party gains, only Belize's gain. It was a quality that was rare in most politicians I had met.

I have always advocated that the Right Honourable PM Esquivel's tremendous contributions to Belize has been largely overlooked in favor of the Father of the Nation, George C. Price or more recently, PM's Musa and Barrow. I sincerely believe that if it was not for him, the nation of Belize would be in the pits with the likes of Haiti and Venezuela.

We should let our people know what this man has done for Belize, because if we don't the scenario in the Philippines can be repeated in Belize.

My deepest condolences to the family of the late Right Honourable Dr. Manuel Esquivel, the United Democratic Party and the nation of Belize. We have lost a most upstanding person.

It's all about the people!

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily reflective of the newspaper's stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS VACANCY NOTICE

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill the post of **Health Planner, Policy and Planning Unit**, Ministry of Health & Wellness.

Principal Duties: Policy analysis and development. Human Resources planning and management; data management information system; technical assistance to health regions, monitoring Service Level Agreements; Assessment and improvement of NHI Health Care Package; improving Primary Health Care Activities; and Provide technical assistance to all four (4) Health Regions which includes all public and private institutions. Compile and develop annual national and regional reports. Assist in development of working budgets and financing for health activities.

Salary Pay Scale: 23 of \$34,428 x \$1,392.00 = \$60,876.00

Qualification: Master's Degree in a Public Health or related Social Science field is preferred.

Deadline: Deadline is March 1st, 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

Note: Please visit www.health.gov.bz to view the copy of the Terms of Reference for this vacant post.

The Righters Write

Freedom from Torture

Contributed by the Human Rights Commission

Readers may recall that almost exactly one year ago, in mid-February, national news outlets reported allegations of prison abuse at the Kolbe Foundation. The Human Rights Commission received a letter with these same videos. Now, while the prison officials denied such actions happened under the current administration, the reality is that the images were recorded at the Central Prison and prisoners were abused and tortured.

Persons who did time at the prison have also come forward and alleged abuse and torture behind prison walls with the media. There have also been allegations of torture at the hands of law enforcement officials and some individuals present images as proof. The intention here is not to go up against any institution or law enforcement officers. The intention is really to bring attention to the subject of torture.

Torture is found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, in article 5 which states that “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” But what is torture? The Equality and Human Rights Commission defines it as occurring “when someone deliberately causes very serious and cruel suffering (physical or mental) to another person. This might be to punish someone, or to intimidate or obtain information from them.”

What is inhuman treatment? The Commission defines it as “treatment which causes intense physical or mental suf-

fering. It includes serious physical assault, psychological interrogation, cruel or barbaric detention conditions or restraints, serious physical or psychological abuse in a health or care setting, and threatening to torture someone, if the threat is real and immediate.” It also goes on to explain degrading treatment as “treatment that is extremely humiliating and undignified. Whether treatment reaches a level that can be defined as degrading depends on a number of factors. These include the duration of the treatment, its physical or mental effects and the sex, age, vulnerability and health of the victim. This concept is based on the principle of dignity - the innate value of all human beings.”

The UDHR, human rights organizations and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, OHCHR, declare this right as absolute, and must not be restricted or limited in any way, shape or form. And this is not only referring to law enforcement offices or prisons. Take for example this scenario from ‘The Human Rights Act: Changing Lives’, British Institute of Human Rights, 2006 - A young man with mental health problems was placed in residential care. During a visit, his parents noticed bruising on his body. They raised the issue with the care managers but their concerns were dismissed. They were also banned from visiting their son. The parents raised their son’s right not to be treated in an inhuman and degrading way and their right

to respect for family life. The ban on visits was revoked and the bruising on the young man’s body was investigated.

It is important to also note that this subject is also addressed in the Convention on the Rights of persons with Disabilities, CRPD. It clearly states that, “1. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. In particular, no one shall be subjected without his or her free consent to medical or scientific experimentation. (and) 2. States Parties shall take all effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, from being subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Still, anyone can be subjected to torture - people from ethnic minorities, protesters, student activists, and people who were simply in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The ban on torture was included into the UDHR as a “reflection of the revulsion against Nazi concentration camps and Nazi medical experiments on living people...It is further elaborated in the 1984 UN Convention Against Torture, which makes the absolute nature of the prohibition of torture crystal clear: “No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as justification of torture”, - UN 30 Articles on 30 Articles.

There have been years of work invested by human rights

defenders to stop these practices by some states including the United States of America which saw condemnation from its very own retired generals, admirals, military lawyers and intelligence officers. But it was the age of technology that seemed to make a bigger shift into how states use and justify the use of torture. With more images and footage of individuals being tortured popping up on the media and social media, the human rights abuses were more evident.

There is still so much more to do, however! Even with images and footage, sometimes there is no justice found. The OHCHR writes, on

the subject of states using torture on persons in detention or imprisoned, that what is done with information of torture or inhumane treatment depends on political will. Former head of Amnesty International Pierre Sané of Senegal says, “The problem is not lack of early warning, but lack of early action.” It goes on to say that, “Even so, the UN considers that regular monitoring of places of detention by internal and external independent oversight mechanisms to be one of the most effective methods of preventing torture. The elevation of human rights to the international level means that behaviour is no longer governed

solely by national standards.”

Amnesty International states that 172 countries have adhered to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which prohibits torture and other forms of ill-treatment, and 165 countries are parties to the UN Convention against Torture. Still, many governments have not criminalized torture.

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MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS VACANCY NOTICE

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill the post of **Health Economist, Policy and Planning Unit, Ministry of Health & Wellness.**

Principal Duties: The Health Economist is expected to provide expert advice in the areas of resource utilization, value for money and alternative health financing strategies.

The officer is expected to monitor expenditure patterns and trends in public and private capital and recurrent health expenditure for preventative, primary Health Care, ambulatory care and hospital care; pharmaceuticals and medical equipment procurement and usage. The officer is also expected to provide advice on the implications of expenditure patterns on access, efficiency and equity in the health system.

Salary Pay Scale: 23 of \$34,428 x \$1,392.00 = \$60,876.00

Qualification: Master’s Degree in Health Economics or related field and experience in policy analysis, planning, research or teaching.

Deadline: Deadline is March 1st, 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

Note: Please visit health.gov.bz to view the copy of the Terms of Reference for this vacant post.



FUN FACTS!

Why Seat Belt Safety?

Follow these seat belt tips and guidelines, including do's and don'ts when you're pregnant. Then have some fun quizzing yourself about the myths and facts of buckling up, and test your seat belt IQ.

1. Buckling up is the single most effective thing you can do to protect yourself in a crash

Seat belts are the best defense against impaired, aggressive, and distracted drivers. Being buckled up during a crash helps keep you safe and secure inside your vehicle; being completely ejected from a vehicle is almost always deadly.

2. Air bags are designed to work with seat belts, not replace them

If you don't wear your seat belt, you could be thrown into a rapidly opening frontal air bag. Such force could injure or even kill you. Learn about air bag safety.

3. Guidelines to



buckle up safely

The lap belt and shoulder belt are secured across the pelvis and rib cage, which are better able to withstand crash forces than other parts of your body.

Place the shoulder belt across the middle of your chest and away from your neck.

The lap belt rests across your hips, not your stomach.

NEVER put the

shoulder belt behind your back or under an arm.

4. Fit matters

Before you buy a new car, check to see that its seat belts are a good fit for you.

Ask your dealer about seat belt adjusters, which can help you get the best fit.

If you need a roomier belt, contact your vehicle manufacturer to obtain seat belt extenders.

If you drive an older or classic car with lap belts only, check with your vehicle manufacturer about how to retrofit your car with today's safer lap/shoulder belts.

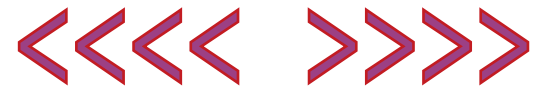
5. Seat belt safety for children and pregnant women

Find out when your child is ready to use an adult seat belt and learn about seat belt safety when you're pregnant.



Roaming Rights!

Trespassing isn't much of a thing in Norway. The country has a law called 'allemannsretten,' meaning 'every man's right' or 'the right to roam,' that dates back to ancient times and allows you to freely roam and camp on all uncultivated land- as long as you show respect for nature and pick up your trash.

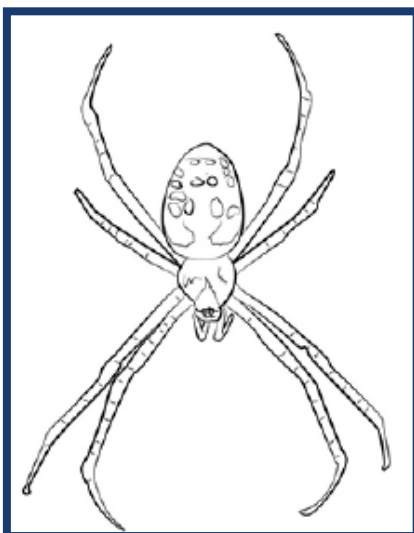


Crabby!

The phrase 'crab mentality' is used to describe the 'if I can't have it, neither can you' mindset. The metaphor refers to a pot of crabs that could easily get out, but they ensure their own demise by competitively clawing at each other- like spiteful humans trying to bring down those who are more successful by diminishing their importance.



COLOR ME



Spider silk is stronger by weight than steel. Spider silk is lighter than cotton and 1,000 times thinner than human hair, yet it's also incredibly strong for such a wispy material. This is vital for spiders, who need their silk to withstand destructive forces, from the flapping of trapped insects to blasts of wind and rain.

Spider silk is surprisingly diverse. Unlike silk-making insects, which tend to produce only one kind of silk, spiders make many varieties, each specialized for its own range of purposes. No one is sure how many types exist, but researchers have identified several basic categories of spider silk, each produced by a different silk gland. An individual spider can typically make at least three or four kinds of silk, and some orb weavers can make seven.

Spiders make silk kites, slingshots, submarines and more. Silk gives spiders a wide range of housing options, from iconic spiral webs to tubes, funnels, trap doors and even submarines. The latter are mostly built by semiaquatic species like the beach-dwelling Bob Marley spider, which makes air chambers to ride out high tide, but there is one known species — the diving bell spider — that spends almost its entire life underwater. It only leaves its air chamber to grab prey or replenish the air supply, but even that doesn't happen very often, since the silk bubble can draw in dissolved oxygen from the water outside.

Silk goes from liquid to solid as it leaves a spider's body. Silk glands hold a fluid known as "spinning dope," with proteins called spidroins arranged in a liquid crystalline solution. This travels via tiny tubes from the silk gland to the spinneret, where the proteins start to align and partly solidify the dope. When it leaves the spinneret, the liquid dope is solid silk.

Despite our long fascination with spider silk, humans have also struggled to harness its powers on a larger scale. We've had trouble farming spiders like we do with silkworms, partly due to the territorial and sometimes cannibalistic nature of its creators. And due to the fineness of their silk, it can take 400 spiders to produce one square yard of cloth.



Newfound variant of HIV progresses to AIDS faster and may be more transmissible

A newfound variant of HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, has been uncovered in the Netherlands and appears to cause faster disease progression compared with other versions of the virus.

The human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infects and destroys immune cells called CD4 cells in the body, causing the number of these cells to plummet. If left untreated, the infection then progresses to AIDS. In people infected with the newfound HIV variant, called the VB variant, the CD4 counts fall at about twice the rate as those of people infected with closely related HIV strains, meaning those of the same genetic subtype (B).

Without treatment, infections with the VB variant would likely progress to AIDS, on average, within two to three years of a person's initial HIV diagnosis, researchers reported Thursday (Feb. 3) in the journal *Science*. With other versions of the virus, a similar degree of decline occurs about six to seven years after diagnosis, on average.

"We found that on average, individuals with this variant would be expected to progress from diagnosis to 'advanced HIV' in nine months, if they do not start treatment and if diagnosed in their thirties," first author Chris Wymant, said a senior researcher in statistical genetics and pathogen dynamics at the University of Oxford. The disease's progression would be even faster in an older person, he said.

Thankfully, in their study, the team found that antiretroviral drugs, the standard treatment for HIV, work just as well against the VB variant as they do against other versions of the virus. "For an individual on successful treatment, the deterioration of the immune system towards AIDS is stopped, and transmission of their virus to other individuals is stopped," Wymant said.

"The authors use the case study to underpin the importance of universal access to treatment," said Katie Atkins, chancellor's fellow at Edinburgh Medical School and an associate professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine who was not involved in the study. "Both because we want to directly reduce the number of people dying unnecessarily of AIDS, but also as a means to reduce the amount of circulating virus and therefore reduce the chance of new, more deadly variants emerging," she said.

How the variant was spotted

Wymant and infectious-disease epidemiologist Christophe Fraser, the study's senior author, are both key members of the BEEHIVE project, an effort to better understand HIV biology, evolution and epidemiology. "The BEEHIVE project, begun in 2014, was created to understand how changes in the virus, encoded in its genetics, cause differences in disease," Wymant said. "The project brings together data from seven national HIV cohorts in Europe plus one in Uganda."

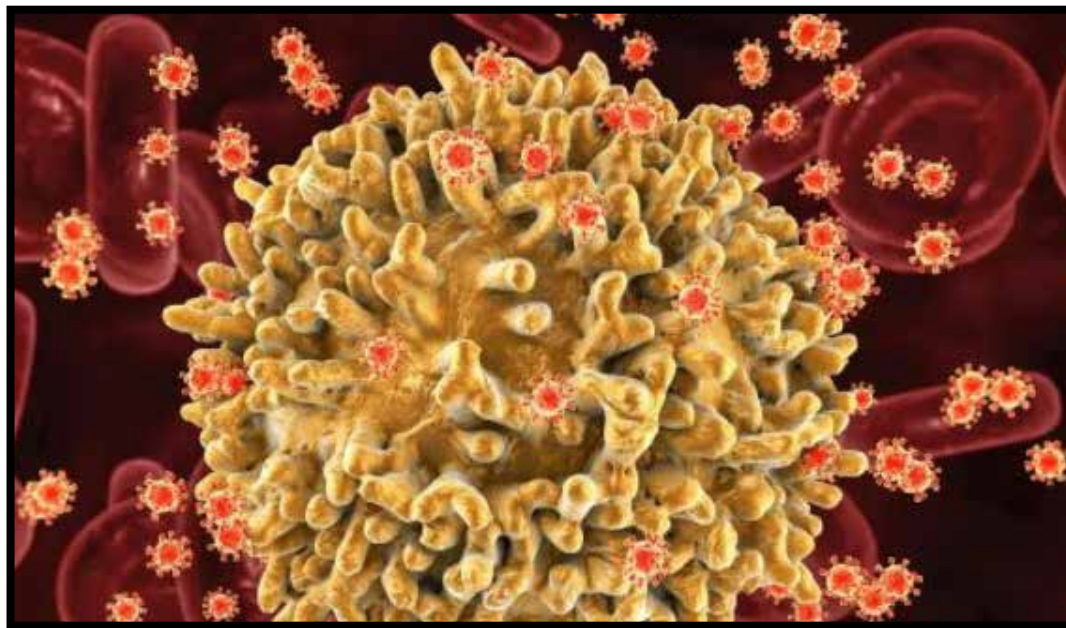
While analyzing data from the ongoing study, the team identified 17 individuals infected with a "distinct" HIV variant, all of whom carried strikingly high concentrations of the virus in their blood early in infection — between six months and two years post-diagnosis. Fifteen of the infected individuals were from the Netherlands, one was from Switzerland and one was from Belgium.

The newfound variant belongs to the genetic subtype B, a group of related HIV viruses most commonly

found in Europe and the U.S., the team found. To see if they could find more examples of the variant in the Netherlands, the researchers screened data from the ATHENA national observational HIV cohort, a large group of HIV-positive individuals in the Netherlands who were diagnosed between 1981 and 2015.

Viral genetic sequence data was available for more than 8,000 of these individuals, and of these, about 6,700 were infected with subtype B viruses. Within this group, the researchers identified 92 individuals with the distinctive VB variant, which brought their total to 109.

Based on the available clinical data, these 109 individuals carried 3.5-fold to 5.5-fold higher viral loads than people infected with other subtype B strains. And at their time of diagnosis, the individuals infected with the VB variant already had lower CD4 counts than those infected with other strains. So compared with other people newly diagnosed with HIV, their CD4 counts both started lower and fell faster.



To explain how this sharp uptick in virulence arose, the researchers went back to the VB variant genome, searching for clues. They found that the variant carries many mutations, scattered throughout its genome, so for now, they couldn't pinpoint a single, isolated genetic cause for the virus's increased virulence, they reported.

"It is unlikely that one mutation, or even one gene, is responsible for this change," said Joel Wertheim, an associate professor of medicine at the University of California, San Diego, who was not involved in the study. "Working out this mechanism is of great interest," he told *Live Science* in an email.

The team was able to construct a diagram called a phylogenetic tree based on the available genetic data, "very similar to normal family trees for humans" that show how closely different individuals are related to each other, Wymant said. Based on this tree, they estimated that the VB variant likely first appeared during the late 1980s or 1990s in the Netherlands. Around that time, the first antiretroviral treatment for HIV had just been approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and treatments using combinations of antiretrovirals were not yet available, according to a 2019 review in the journal *Health Affairs*.

"During this decade, there would have been a high prevalence of untreated HIV infected individuals who were not virally suppressed in Western Europe," Atkins said. "This high number of people who were not virally suppressed would have provided a large virus population in which a new variant could have emerged."

The tree suggested that individuals who caught the VB variant carried "viruses that were unusually closely related to each other," Wymant said. This finding suggests that little viral evolution occurred between the time that someone acquired the virus and the point when they passed it on to someone else.

In other words, on top of being highly virulent, the VB variant may also be more transmissible than other versions of HIV. However, this finding is less conclusive than the evidence of increased virulence, since the tree provides only indirect evidence of the virus's transmissibility, Wymant said.

After the VB variant emerged in the 1980s or 1990s, the number of people infected with the variant steadily increased until about 2010. At the same time, the proportion of new VB cases among all new subtype B cases began to increase. This increase peaked around 2008 and then steadily declined, the team found.

"This is most likely a by-product of the strong efforts in the Netherlands to decrease transmission of any HIV, regardless what variant it is," Wymant said. Absolute numbers of both VB and non-VB diagnoses were declining at this time, and there is some uncertainty in the data as to the exact ratio of VB to non-VB infections, the authors noted.

The discovery of a highly virulent HIV variant isn't necessarily surprising, Wertheim said. "This finding is in line with both evolutionary theory and the trends towards increased virulence we've seen in the United States over the decades," he told *Live Science*. "I am most surprised by how stark and distinct this newly described cluster is."

Looking forward, Wertheim said he expects many groups around the world to begin screening their data to see if the VB variant has spread beyond the Netherlands. "Also, I am curious as to whether similar variants have emerged elsewhere in the world," Wertheim said.

Other than the cases detected in people from Switzerland and Belgium, the team found no initial evidence of the variant beyond the Netherlands. They searched publicly available viral genetic sequences and found no trace elsewhere, but there may be at least a few others infected with the variant that have yet to be identified, Wymant said. "By making the genetic sequence of the VB variant openly available, we are allowing other investigators in different countries to check their own private data," he said.

Future studies of the VB variant could reveal how it builds up in the blood and decimates CD4 cells so quickly, and also provide more details as to how the variant first evolved. The team found evidence that the variant steadily picked up its mutations, one by one, over time, but they couldn't tell if this evolution occurred in multiple individuals or just one, Wymant said.

In the meantime, should the general public be concerned about the newfound VB variant?

"The public needn't be worried," Wymant said. "Finding this variant emphasises the importance of guidance that was already in place: that individuals at risk of acquiring HIV have access to regular testing to allow early diagnosis, followed by immediate treatment ... These principles apply equally to the VB variant."

Mixed reviews on mandatory travel insurance

Cont'd from pg. 1

hotels are equally concerned and are holding their collective breath ahead of the huge surge of visitors that are expected this weekend. While Saldivar said that the price of US \$18 for the insurance policy has been well received by many of the visitors, it continues to be a controversial issue among members.

“While some tourists feel that the cost is acceptable, the process to purchase the insurance seems to be off to a bad start,” Saldivar explained. “There have been some technical issues on the site as we have reports from travelers about double charging and other technical issues. The worst part is the fact that the program has added to very long lines at the airport. As you know there are already many existing

challenges with the infrastructure at the airport so our visitors are now required to stand outside to purchase this insurance if they weren't able to do it online before they arrived.”

She went on to tell The Reporter that the videos and photographs that were taken outside the PGIA on Tuesday which showed the snaking lines were worrying to say the least. She even went as far as to say that it was unfortunate that the website was not even functional up until a couple of days prior to its launch. Despite all of the thorns that are sticking out, Saldivar said that the BHA will do their best to encourage all of its members to notify their guests to purchase the insurance plan in advance so as to avoid any delays in their travel.

The Reporter also spoke to Stewart

Krohn, the managing director of Naia Resort and Spa, who is also the President of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (BTIA). Krohn admitted that while there are several reports of administrative hiccups this week, he strongly supports the new mandate and also expects that those gaps in the process could be ironed out by next week.

According to Krohn, while in some quarters there are arguments that the price of the insurance policy is an added cost to travelers, majority of them have agreed that it is affordable and so far it have not proven to be a major barrier for persons coming into the country.

“I think that if you weigh the advantages of the insurance with the disadvantages I think in the long run it is going to

help arrivals in Belize rather than hurt it. As a hotel owner we strongly support it; we thought that it is a good thing for our guests because what we have found is that many of our guests and potential ones some of their biggest fear is that while they want to come to Belize, they are afraid of testing positive for the virus while on vacation and then end up having to quarantine in a strange country.”

One resort that we know of that has decided to turn lemons into lemonade is the Naia resort and Spa. According to Krohn they have used the situation to their advantage and have made it a part of their marketing strategy by paying the US \$18 tab for each of their guests by agreeing that if the guest pays the insurance, upon booking into their resort

they will be entitled to an \$18 USD tab for each individual visitor.

“To avoid even the least negative feedback, we believe that it is in our best interest because we do not think that \$18 is a lot of money for the length of time that it offers protection. We see it as a goodwill marketing gesture on our part,” said Krohn.

While Krohn said that he is aware that it is the tourists' responsibility to purchase the travel insurance prior to their arrival in the country, he is also of the view that some resorts are not doing enough to inform their guest of the newest requirement, and are not making enough effort to publicize such an important announcement on their website or social media page. He went on to ask BTIA members to

inform their guests of these changes as soon as possible.

The Belize Travel Insurance can be purchased online at <https://www.belize-travel-insurance.com>. Apart from a valid passport, tourists are also required to show proof of having purchased the insurance plan as well as confirmation of their booking at a Gold Standard Hotel, which they will present to Immigration personnel. Travelers are also being required to complete the Immigration form that is provided on their respective flights and present a negative COVID-19 test upon arrival at the airport. If a test cannot be presented then one will be administered at the airport for a fee of USD \$50 per passenger. Children under the age of 5 will be exempted from these regulations.



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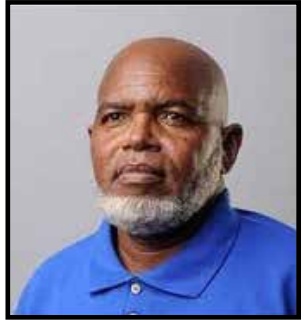
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GRASSROOTS

The Advancement of Cricket



By Hon. Gilroy Usher

“Whatever the mind can conceive and believe, it can achieve.”

–Napoleon Hill

After being mostly dormant for the past two years due to COVID, the advancement of cricket in the Belize

District took a major step forward with a two-day marathon on Saturday and Sunday February 12th and 13th in the village of Bermudian Landing.

The day of sport had the participation of 8 teams was organized by the Belize National Cricket Association (BNCA).

As Minister of State for Youth, Sports, and Transport this writer was humbled by the opportunity to give the main address for the start of the games.

This writer was also humbled by the opportunity to deliver the 1st place prize of \$1,000.00 which was donated by Hon. Rodwell Ferguson Minister of Youth, Sports, and Transport and myself. The first place prize was won by the B.D.F. which batted 67 runs.

The 2nd place prize of \$500.00 was donated by Hon. Marconi Leal, Area Representative for BRN and was taken by Flowers Bank. A special prize for the team which displayed the best sportsmanship was also delivered by Hon. Marconi Leal.

Special guest for the occasions was His Excellence Dr. Colville Young, former Governor General of Belize.

It was the first time in decades that sports was given the importance it deserves with a Minister of Sports giving the opening address at a major sporting activity in the Belize District and participating in the delivery of the prizes later.

Hon. Rodwell Ferguson Minister of Youth, Sports, and Transport sent his sincere apology for being unable to be present for the marathon due to prior commitments.

With the conclusion of the marathon, over a dozen teams will participate in the Sir Barry Bowen /Harrison Parks Cricket Competition 2022.

For the benefit of young cricket players and sports fans, I grew up in Bermudian Landing along with my siblings Herbert Blades and Norman Usher with our grandparents Mr. Hubert Baptist, who was one of the ferrymen and his wife Mrs. Clavia Baptist.

We were raised by our grandparents on our mother’s side from 4, 5, and 7 years after our mother, Norma Lord, lost her life in a fire due to a domestic dispute in the neighboring village of Double Head Cabbage.

I attended St. Isabella R.C. School now Belize Rural Primary in Bermudian Landing.

After graduating from St. John’s College and the Belize Teachers’ College, I was employed as a teacher in the villages of Bermudian Landing, St. Paul’s Bank, Rancho Dolores, and Sand Hill for many years.

During my years of teaching in the Belize District, Summer Fever from the

same Bermudian Land proved itself to be one of the best cricked teams in the Belize River valley by winning of numerous championships

I later graduated from the University of Belize, published Liberty newspaper for a few years, opened Monica’s Pawnshop, and after 12 years of hard work was elected as the Area Representative for Port Loyola in the 2020 general election.

I shared those to remind everyone—especially the youth—that Bermudian Landing and the other villages in the Belize River valley have good teachers, talented youth and adults, good parents, good role models, and opportunities for people to realize their dreams with education, hard

The future of cricket looks good, because the officials of the BNCA are mostly young and well-educated persons, who know the game, know to organize, manage, and lobby successfully, know the importance of adopting to modern trends in sports, and know the importance of making the game attractive to younger players and a wide cross-section of the community.

work, and dedication.

Those dreams might be 1) being the best cricket players to represent the community at home and abroad, 2) being the team that has won the most cricket championships, 3) being persons, who get the opportunity to further their education with athletic scholarships, or 4) being the first persons who enable BNCA to access millions of dollars in funding from the International Cricket Association (ICA) to improve the sport at all levels, wherever it is played in the country.

Sincere thanks is in order to Hon. Marconi Leal –Area Representative for BRN for assisting with funds other possible things that made the cricket marathon a reality.

Sincere gratitude is also in order to Dr. Roy Young –President of BNCA and his team for leading the way in developing the sport for both males and females, and accessing funding for gears and other necessary things from the ICA. Under Dr. Young’s leadership cricket has made Belize proud at home and abroad in both male and female categories.

The future of cricket looks good, because the officials of the BNCA are mostly young and well-educated persons, who know the game, know to organize, manage, and lobby successfully, know the importance of adopting to modern trends in sports, and know the importance of making the game attractive to younger players and a wide cross-section of the community.

It is there no surprise that most of the cricket players are persons under fifty years and many of the top bowlers are individuals under 40 years of age.

The BNCA has also rid the sport of boredom and made it more attractive and exciting by complying with the rules of the ICA.

Those rules require for specific color uniforms and wickets for certain matches as well as fielders and batters, who are very aggressive during a game. The aggressiveness on the field is achieved by

limiting a match to a specific number of minutes or overs whichever comes first.

With the latter change the team at bat has to score as many runs as possible to have a chance of winning a match or in batting the opposing team will overcome its score easily and win the game without worrying about it being stopped due to darkness.

Sports have always been one of the most important things for national development in any country.

It is, therefore, good to know that under the leadership of the Hon. Rodwell Ferguson and myself the National Sports Council has contributed significantly to the cricket marathon in Bermudian Landing.

For now G.O.B. is severely limited in how much funds it can inject into the development of sports and other necessary things, because the previous administration left the country broke.

After they busted a budget of over a billion dollars yearly for 13 long years, sporting facilities and other assets of the country were left in shambles, because those leaders put self-enrichment with the resources of the nation before development for the benefit of the people and country of Belize.

One of the worst neglect and misappropriation of public funds was evident at Rhaburn Ridge Center near mile 25 on the Philip Goldson Highway. Over \$5 million was spent to develop the area for youth, sports, and agriculture. Nevertheless all that exist at the site are 6 “maras” filled Tilapia ponds without fish, only the incomplete walls of a concrete building, and a mixture of about 50 fruit trees.

Youth are the futures leaders of a nation, but youth is also the time when young persons need the most guidance and support with education, employment, and counseling thorough the family, the community, the government, and NGO’s.

Serious improvement of cricket and other sports programs that results in tangible benefits for the youth and other persons in the communities is, therefore, among the best ways to build a country with law-abiding, hardworking, and ambitions persons.

Neglect of the improvement of sports including cricket means less jobs and other opportunities for the youth and others to improve their lives and pursue their dreams, and more criminals in the society.

It is, therefore, good news that in addition to many other activities to promote sports at all levels, the National Sports Council is in the processes of organizing district basketball and football competition with attractive prizes.

The Ministry of Youth, Sports, and Transport, look forward to the participation of teams from the Belize District in both of those competitions.

It is only by injecting the necessary funds in sport with the budget, that our country will reap the tremendous benefits of cricket and other sports in national development.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily reflective of the newspaper’s stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

Belize Water Services Limited invites applicants to fill the vacant post of **Customer Service Manager** in the Customer Service Department.

SUMMARY:

Manages, plans, organizes, integrates and evaluates the service activities and operations of assigned branch; ensures that at the branch level customer expectations are being met and exceeded by team, and performs related duties as assigned. Implement policies and procedures and the company mission, vision and core values is carried out effectively.

DEPARTMENT DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

- Administer a comprehensive complaint policy and procedures system guided by the Codes of Practice and Water Industry Act.
- Improve our efficiency - Reduce customer waiting time wherever possible and manage all customers' queries and complaints professionally.
- Build and maintain an excellent Customer experience whilst focusing on the company's mission, vision, and core values.
- Improve our customer base – whilst ensuring continuous reduction in the company's Account Receivable and at the same time retain and increase our customer base
- Empower our workforce – Provides coaching, guidance, and feedback that works to develop and retain a highly competent, team of customer-service oriented staff through selection, training and day-to-day management practices which support the Company's mission, vision and values
- Address and solve complaints and queries received in a way that is a win-win for both the customer and the company and provide the necessary follow-up to customers.
- Quality assurance through monitoring of policies and procedures and providing feedback to staff members.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES - The incumbent may not perform all of the listed duties and/or may be required to perform additional or different duties from those set forth below to address business needs and changing business practices.

- Plans, manages, controls, evaluates and administrative assistance to the Customer Service area at the branch offices countrywide.
- Assist the manager with the day-to-day management and reporting.
- Recommend and assist in the implementation of goals and objectives; establish schedules and methods for customer service; implement policies and procedures.
- Evaluate operations and activities of assigned responsibilities; recommend improvements and modifications; prepare various reports on operations and activities.
- Coordinate, analyze and implement strategies to ensure that all key accounts countrywide are properly monitored.
- Review and analyze meter reading, field service, and collections activities in relation to billing reports to assess unit production at the district level.
- Make adjustments as necessary with regard to billing problems; and communicate directly with customers to resolve difficult or complex service/billing issues for the district offices.
- Participate in the selection of staff; provide or coordinate staff training; work with employees to correct deficiencies; implement discipline procedures.
- Answer questions and provide information to the public; investigate complaints and recommend corrective action as necessary to resolve complaints.
- Conduct monthly district visit to branch offices to ensure that they are adhering to policies and processes.
- Build and maintain positive working relationships with co-workers and the public using the principles of good customer service.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL REQUIREMENTS:

Candidates will need to show evidence of the following:

- written and spoken communication skills that allow you to inform, help and advice customers, and liaise with other professionals;
- listening skills, to understand exactly what customers require; problem-solving skills;
- confidence, patience, politeness, tact and diplomacy, when dealing with difficult situations;
- motivational skills and an ability to supervise and lead a team of customer service assistants;
- creative thinking, to be able to come up with new ideas to improve customer service standards;
- an ability to work well under pressure;
- organizational and planning skills to develop customer services policies;
- good personal presentation, especially when working with customers face to face

COMPETENCIES TO BE EVALUATED ON:

1. Technical and Functional Skills
2. Understanding of the Business
3. Ability to achieving Results
4. Serving the Customer
5. Teamwork
6. Interpersonal and Communication Skills
7. Leadership and Personal Effectiveness

EXPECTATIONS:

- Prepare, maintain, and submit monthly reports on operational and personnel matters.
- Maintain a schedule of month end reports outlining the date received and errors identified on the reports.
- Make recommendations to management concerning staff matters and improvement to procedures and policies.
- Communicates with other departments and management to resolve problems and expedite work.
- Train and instruct staff members, assist with hiring of staff members and make recommendation to discharge staff members whenever necessary.
- Required to have an excellent knowledge of the company's mission, vision, core values, Codes of Practice and the Water Industry Act and possess the ability to communicate such to employees and customers verbally and in writing whenever necessary.
- Ensures that adjustments are prepared for (over-estimated customers, wrong reading, high bill or others).
- Ensures that jobs in JTS are closed one day after work in completed in the field and all jobs are moved from created to pending status and pass to Operations Department.
- Keep record of the time refund of security deposit request is received from the district to process the payment.
- Ensure that DISN and Inactive meters are dealt with monthly.
- Ensure that all accounts are billed timely and efficiently conduct random (25%) check of all cycles to identify inconsistencies.

EDUCATION AND QUALIFICATIONS:

- Master's degree in Accounting or Business Management with at least 5 years' experience or Bachelor's degree with at least 10 years' experience in customer service activities or accounting duties and managerial responsibilities will be an asset.

Interested persons can send your application letter with your detailed resume **March 4, 2022** to:

Human Resources Manager
Belize Water Services Limited,
 P.O. Box 150, Central American Boulevard, Belize City, Belize
 Email : hr@bwsli.com.bz

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