

Reporter

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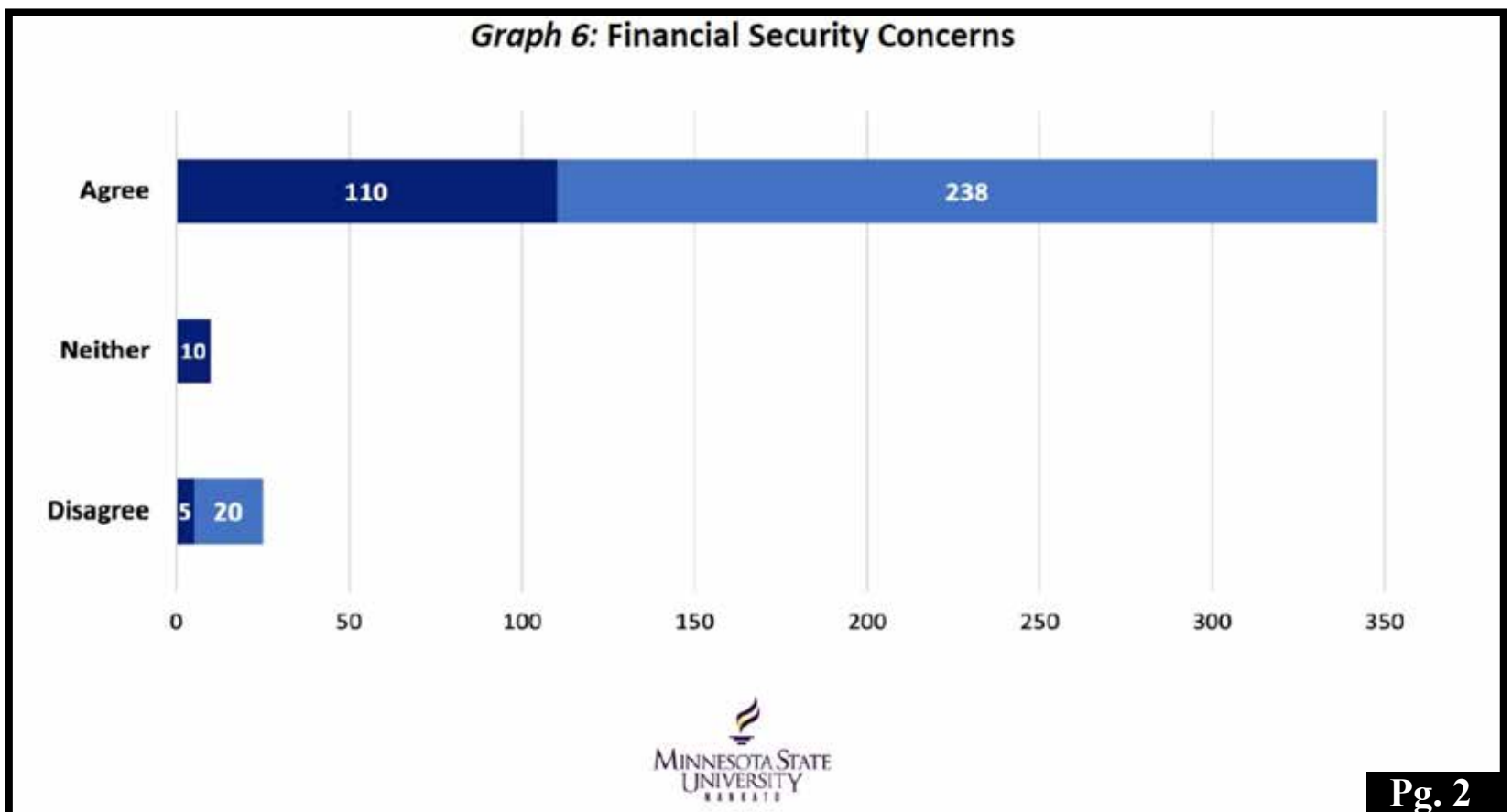
Sunday, January 16th, 2022

Price: \$1.00

Salary cut left 90% of public servants financial insecure: study finds

Close to 90 percent of Belizean teachers and public servants who endured last year's ten-percent salary cuts are worried about whether they can pay their bills, a recent study prepared for the Department of Education revealed.

Prepared by the Organizational Effectiveness Research Group at Minnesota State University (OERG Consulting), the report "summarizes the results of a survey conducted in the summer of 2021 to assess the extent to which the



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Cane farmers want a simpler cane payment formula



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(Inside pic: Hon. Hugo Pitt) Cane farmers delivering cane to the mill

UDP asks to whom \$15 million Blue Bond closing costs was paid



Pg. 3

By William Ysaguirre

The Opposition United Democratic Party has called on the Government of Belize to honor its commitment to transparency and accountability by explaining to whom the \$15 million in lawyers and advisors' fees was paid in October, which were added to the closing costs for the

Superbond buyback and the launch of the Blue Bond with the financial backing of the Nature Conservancy.

Senator Hon. Michael Peyrefitte addressed this question to the Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño in a letter, after both Briceño and the Minister of State failed to answer the question when Opposition Leader Hon. Patrick



The first two weeks of the new year have brought bad news and good news. The bad news is that the Omicron virus of the Covid pandemic has struck hard all over the world, and Belize is no exception.

Those who somehow avoided the earlier virus are succumbing to the Omicron wave which is more viral than anything we have seen before. Our health care institutions are once more at peak capacity as more and more people have fallen ill.

Omicron victims show symptoms within two to three days, half the time it takes for the older Delta virus to show.

The good news is that the pandemic is expected to peak this month. The experts tell us that Omicron will subside just as quickly as it started, but with a wider umbrella of protection for the population. This is because of the immunity which the Omicron virus will confer.

If all goes well and we continue to be vigilant, Belize could be home free by March or April. There are new medications tailored specifically to combat Omicron, but the tidalwave of infections will have shrunk in size long before these come to market.

The Briceño Government has had to face harsh criticism from people over its decision last week to admit the cruise ship MSC Divina carrying a cluster of Omicron victims among its passengers and crew. At least five Caribbean countries had denied the cruise ship entry. The Bahamas, Jamaica, Aruba, Panama and Costa Rica, all refused to admit her.

But seriously, a cluster of sequestered sick people on a cruise ship poses no real danger to anybody in Belize. We face a greater danger every day from our own people who cannot be bothered to obey the commonsense rules of health safety.

By extending a hand of Belizean hospitality to a cruise line in distress Belize has sent a clear message to the cruise line industry.

The message is this: Belize has a sensible attitude towards Covid care. We are a partner in the tourist industry and we want to work with responsible cruise lines which need our help during this crisis.

Salary cut left 90% of public servants ...

Cont'd from pg. 1 tiered pay cuts of the Belizean education and public service employees affected employee satisfaction."

Among the key findings, the study shows that close to 91 percent of respondents indicated that they are worried about their "financial security."

The study also finds that 55.5 percent of the public workers "do not feel valued by their leadership," with close to 45 percent of the respondents having considered quitting the public service.

In terms of stress levels, the OERG research found that 49 percent of Belizean public-

sector employees are suffering from a mix of stress-related health problems. Notably, the aforementioned figure is above the national average.

Among the almost 400 respondents, 59.2 percent described themselves as being the primary breadwinner for their families.

Additionally, among the respondents, 49 percent worked in education and 51 percent within the public service.

The study also finds that "Belizean employees remain committed to personal development and serving their clients," despite the salary cut and the reported lack of feeling valued.

Schoolchildren most vulnerable to Omicron as classes resume

Belize City, January 11th, 2022

The Ministry of Education and Culture is not adequately helping teachers prepare for their students' return to face-to-face instruction and hybrid learning, at a time the new Omicron variant has increased the infection rate exponentially among the very young, the UDP secretary general Carol Babb PhD and Dr Shanikka Arnold deplored at the UDP's press conference at the party's headquarters in Belize City on Tuesday morning, January 11.

The safety and health of the children is the most important consideration, even as educators push for children to improve their levels of learning by returning to in-person teaching, Babb said. School principals are complaining of a shortage of supplies, and even when they get a positive response via the MoECST's online platform, the skimpy quantity of supplies are hardly worth the fuel cost to go pick them up! Rural students are uncertain of what the school bus schedule will be, and how regularly the service will be provided. She also called for the ministry to address the gap between the supply and demand for students' access to computers and other devices, and Internet access.

Younger children are more susceptible to the new wave of the Omicron variant, which has brought record-breaking numbers of new patients, more than even the Delta variant did last October, Dr Arnold said. The children are also more vulnerable to infection, as they are not yet vaccinated. Previously, it was feared that the younger children might remain healthy and asymptomatic when they acquired the COVID virus at school, and then bring it home to infect older family members, who might have to be hospitalized with life-threatening symptoms.

Omicron is also having a greater impact on younger children than the previous variants, infecting even children under five years of age, but there is no vaccine yet available to children under 12, and none has been approved for children under five. All of which is cause for alarm after the children returned to the classrooms on Monday. The Omicron variant has a shorter incubation period, meaning new cases become infectious faster. Fortunately, the symptoms appear to be milder, more resembling the common cold and flu: runny nose, fatigue, headache, sneezing and sore throat.

The Delta variant also brought a higher mortality rate, when it arrived last October, and health authorities have to keep their eyes open for the two new Deltacron and IHU variants detected in France, for which the clinical profile is still not known. This is bringing a mismatch of numbers, Arnold noted, as the hospitals are short-handed



Dr. Shanikka Arnold

with medical staff that are out sick with COVID.

Dr. Arnold said that studies have shown that for every new infection that is detected, there are eight more which go unreported. The daily average for those three days was less than 400 new cases, but then a new daily record of 1,089 new infections were reported on Tuesday.

She also recommended that Belize needs to implement a protocol that screens visitors for COVID before they get on the plane to come to Belize. She deplored the present COVID-screening protocol for visitors, noting that tourists are tested upon arrival at the Philip Goldson International Airport, but are then allowed to proceed to their hotel where they will receive their results five to six hours later. This opens a six-hour window during which an infected visitor may unwittingly infect taxi drivers, hotel and restaurant staff and tour operators, before their infection is reported.

THE REPORTER

Phones: 501- 227-2503 / 227-1767

Fax 501-227- 8278 P.O. Box 707

e-mail: reporternewspaper@gmail.com

editoreporter@gmail.com

website: <http://www.thereporter.bz>

Publisher Harry Lawrence

Editor Dyon A. Elliott

Financial Controller Rosa Maria Lawrence

General Manager Lisbeth Ayuso

Lithographer Rodolfo Castro

Journalists Michelle Sutherland

Dyllan Lawrence

Desktop Publisher/

Graphic Designer Jackie Fuller

Accounts/ Advertising Rodolfo Castro

Chief Printer Leroy Bood

Office Assistant Misael Muñoz

Cane farmers want a simpler cane payment formula

By William Ysaguirre

Sugar cane farmers would really like an upfront payment for their cane upon delivery and to get rid of many of Belize Sugar Industries Ltd's shipping and storage export charges in the cane purchase formula which they don't understand, Corozal North Representative Hon. Hugo Pott declared.

Pott is a member of the Northern Sugar Cane Growers Association which has a cane purchase agreement with BSI, but he said he understood many of the grievances of the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA) which delayed the start of this year's crop until December 28, 2021.

Pott was speaking at a UDP press conference in Belize City on Tuesday, January 11, when he said if he had the option to negotiate he would like to do away completely with the old commercial agreement which dates back to the year 2001, and which most farmers feel is outdated now in 2022.

Speaking personally, as a farmer, Pott said he would tell BSI to do whatever they want with the cane, after the cane has been delivered to the mill. He simply wants the company to tell him in unequivocal terms how much he is going to be paid for his cane in dollars per tonne when the truck hits that scale.

He said he would rather not have to worry about what costs BSI incurs at the mill, or in processing the cane into sugar and transporting the sugar to export buyers. That way he would have nothing to worry about the storage and transportation or the export costs to ship the sugar to market.

"In my opinion, this is one of the root problems. This is where we have cane farmers finding ways into seeing how best they could get money. ... It will become tenser as the weeks come to that closure," Pott said.

Prime Minister John Briceño was able to broker an interim agreement between BSI and BSCFA for the farmers to deliver cane up to the end of its crop.

The farmers have trouble understanding all the trucking, storage, shipping and other back-end charges which BSI factors into the calculation of final cane payment. The age-old 65-35 split with farmers getting 65 percent and the millers getting 35 percent of the net profits after the sugar is sold, is no longer working for the farmers, whose fuel, fertilizer and other production costs have gone up.

They also feel that the payment for the bagasse is inadequate, while the company is unwilling to entertain any talks of paying more.

ASR/B.S.I. representatives have said the company simply does not have the money to pay any more than they are presently offering to BSCFA, because the company has invested heavily to improve the efficiency of its factory operations.

With Belize losing all preferential export quotas for sugar to the European Union when the World Trade organization's free trade regime took effect in 2017, the company invested \$30 million to upgrade the factory to produce direct consumption, plantation white sugar which fetches a premium price, rather than producing raw sugar where world sugar prices have been low.

BSI has also invested another \$30 million to build a storage warehouse at Big Creek Port and in a fleet of trucks to transport the sugar overland

to port to take advantage of economies of scale by the reduced freight charges of shipping sugar in a larger vessel.

This also benefited the environmental health of the New River by removing all shipping operations from the river. As part of its revised environmental compliance plan, BSI also invested another \$10 million to build three new cooling towers to reduce the temperature of the water the factory uses, before it is returned to the river. BSI also invested millions more to install new electrostatic particle separators in the chimneys of the BELCOGEN boilers, to reduce contamination of the atmosphere, which neighboring villages had complained about.

The installation of the electrostatic separators in one boiler chimney is what delayed the scheduled start of crop until December 20, as this year's harvest really ought to have begun the very first week in December, as the farmers have a bumper crop of over 1.3 million tonnes of cane in the field to be delivered. The factory is also operating at about half its milling rate, as it is operating on only one boiler, while the electrostatic separators are installed in the other boiler chimney. The factory won't be able to increase the grinding rate to full capacity of 7,000 tonnes per day until the works are completed and the other boiler comes on line in the coming weeks.

BSCFA's cane purchase agreement with BSI expires on January 19, and it is yet to be seen if the Mill and the farmers will be able to hammer out a new commercial agreement before the interim agreement comes to an end on August 1st, 2022.

UDP asks to whom \$15 million Blue Bond closing costs was paid

Cont'd from pg. 1

Faber queried the supplementary budget for \$15 million, which

the PUP government introduced in the House of Representatives last October 26. Peyrefitte's letter also requested a detailed breakdown of how much was paid to each lawyer and advisor, and when.

The Government's reply completely sidestepped the question, Peyrefitte lamented at the UDP's press conference at the party's headquarters in Belize City on Tuesday

morning. Peyrefitte says he received a three-page letter of reply signed by Briceño, in which the government details that the total \$47 million closing fees were paid to City Capital Markets, Hallmark Advisory, Sullivan and Cromwell, the Bank of New York Mellon, David Pope, Millburn LLP among others, but does not detail how much each party received, nor does it provide supporting documentation.

According to Peyrefitte, nowhere in the letter does it directly answer Peyrefitte's question of who received the \$15 million, as the letter downplays the question, saying the "\$15 million supplementary allocation is a non-issue."

According to Peyrefitte, the Prime Minister's letter also claims that PUP restructured the Superbond at a lower cost than the UDP had done in the past.

The letter points out that the past UDP administration restructured the Superbond twice in 2013 and 2017,

incurring costs of USD\$19,080,111 or about Bze \$38.2 million. Peyrefitte points out that the UDP costs were still less than the \$47 million incurred by the PUP for the Blue Bond.

The PUP had budgeted for \$12 million in closing costs for the restructuring of the Superbond buyback, and when faced with additional costs to pay lawyers, advisors, and the like, the PUP borrowed another \$20 million from The Nature Conservancy, which the letter says "resulted in the government having a surplus of \$16 million to cover closing costs."

Then came the \$15 supplementary budget in October, which brings the grand total of closing costs to \$47 million!

Peyrefitte pledged to continue writing to the Prime Minister seeking answers, and his letter also offers that if he does not get satisfactory answers, he may have to apply to the Ombudsman, as required by law and even to the Court if necessary, to get the information requested.

CLASSIFIED ADS

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that **Celsa Casimiro** of Georgetown Village, Stann Creek District, is applying for a **Restaurant & Bar Liquor License** to be operated at **EC Express** situated in **Georgetown Village, Stann Creek District, for the year 2022.** Under the Intoxication Liquors Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that **Luis Ugarte** of Belize City, is applying for a renewal for a **Publican General Liquor License** to be operated at **GraceKennedy (Belize) Ltd.** situated at **2.5 Miles Philip Goldson Highway, Belize City, from January - December 2022.** Under the Intoxication Liquors Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

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CDC to advise mask upgrade against Omicron

By Javan Flowers

According to an article by The Washington Post earlier this week, the United States' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is considering updating its mask guidance to stem the dramatic increase in the number of Omicron-related coronavirus cases.

The agency will likely advise people to opt for the highly protective N95 or KN95 masks worn by healthcare personnel.

Following the CDC's update to its mask guidelines, federal health officials also revised coronavirus guidance earlier this week to acknowledge that people can get infected by inhaling very fine, aerosolized particles carrying the virus, following warnings from health experts since last year.

The CDC advised that airborne transmission is one of several ways the virus can spread, adding that people more than six feet away from others indoors can become infected, according to the agency's website.



Cloth masks, encouraged earlier in the pandemic, can filter large droplets, while more effective masks, such as N95s, can filter both large droplets and the smaller aerosols or particles potentially laden with airborne virus if infected people are present. A cloth face covering also has 75% inward and outward leakage, which the American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists defines as the "percentage of particles entering the facepiece" and the "percentage of particles exhaled by a source exiting the facepiece," respectively.

Properly fitted N95 respirators that are approved by the US National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health can filter up to 95% of particles in the air, according to the CDC. Surgical or disposable masks are around 5% to 10% less effective than N95 respirators.

Epidemiologists have pushed for worldwide recognition that the virus can be transmitted by inhalation, saying

improved ventilation and other airborne-specific mitigation measures could curb outbreaks.

Kolbe Prison in full COVID lockdown

By William Ysaguirre

An unprecedented, large outbreak of new COVID-19 infections among inmates and staff at the Belize Central Prison over the past three days has prompted the Kolbe Foundation managers to immediately institute a full lockdown of the facility for the next fortnight!

This means no one in and no one out. The management also wishes to notify the public that absolutely no visits, cash deposits for inmates, or any business transactions with the Prison's customers will be conducted during the lockdown.

The Judiciary had already announced this on Wednesday that the courts would be closed for a thorough cleansing and sanitation for the rest of the week until

next Monday, January 17, and any hearings would be conducted virtually by video conferencing.

This is now extended to the inmates' attorneys who are advised not to visit the prison to consult with their clients, but if there is a need, the Courts and Judiciary will coordinate such a virtual visit with the Prison for them to speak to their client online by a secure video-conference call.

The new cases are believed to be the new Omicron variant which has proven to be far more infectious with a faster maturity

period than previous variants but with a clinical profile of milder symptoms similar to the common cold or flu. Thus, the full lockdown will prevent further importation of the virus into the prison, allowing the inmates who are currently infected to recover, and also prevent transmission by anyone who may be infected but asymptomatic and unaware of their condition.

The Foundation thanks the public for understanding the situation and anticipated their full support and cooperation.



VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

The Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO) invites applicants for the functions of National Consultant in the area of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Risk Factors.

Duty station: Belize City

Qualifications: *Essential:* A university degree in one of the health, social or management sciences from a recognized University with emphasis on nutrition related chronic diseases
Desirable: Postgraduate studies in public health or related field.

Experience: *Essential:* At least 7 years' experience in the related field.
Desirable: working experience in health services project management.

Skills:

- Theoretical and practical expertise in all aspects related to surveillance, prevention and control of Noncommunicable diseases, and the promotion of health, as well as a thorough knowledge of epidemiology, prevention, and control methods.
- Ability to analyze factors, trends, and forecast scenarios based on current surveillance systems and possesses the capability to develop and plan innovative and appropriate solutions for their improvement.
- Strong public health and strategic thinking background showing resourcefulness, initiative, leadership qualities and skills to deal with difficult situations and sensitive areas.
- Ability to plan and carry out technical cooperation initiatives on NCDs with emphasis on nutrition related chronic diseases.
- Knowledge of Global Strategies for the prevention and control of NCDs as well as regional, subregional and national situation on NCDs.
- Knowledge of health services policies and administration within the framework of the model of family and community health.
- Knowledge and skills in the formulation of technical cooperation interventions and in the development of criteria and instruments for evaluating program interventions, including resource mobilization and grant management.
- Strong professional oral and writing skills, including the development of reports, oral presentations, and technical/persuasive documents for consideration at the highest levels of the Organization.
- Demonstrated ability to effectively use a computer and utilize software programs such as Microsoft Office Word, Excel, PowerPoint, SharePoint, and Outlook. Other IT skills and knowledge of other software programs for Statistical Analysis, Data Exploratory Analysis and Project Management would be an asset.

Languages: Very good knowledge of English and working knowledge of Spanish

Deadline: Letter of application, Curriculum Vitae, and two current letters of recommendation should be sent to blzmail@paho.org or to P.O. Box 1834, Belize City no later than **20 January 2022**.

For further details visit our website <https://www.paho.org/en/vacancies>. An interview will be held for this position and only candidates under serious consideration will be contacted.

PAHO/WHO has a smoke-free environment and does not recruit smokers or users of any form of tobacco.

Haulover Bridge set to be overhauled

By Javan Flowers

The Government of Belize press office informed the public that the Haulover Bridge Replacement Project (“the project”) will commence on Saturday, January 15th.

The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, through its construction contractor for the project, M&M Engineering Consultants Ltd., will initiate work to place two permanent

mid-river foundation piers, which will be constructed in the Belize River at a location just downstream of the existing bridge.

Multiple heavy lifting barges will be used as platforms for heavy equipment used in the driving of piles and the construction of the reinforced concrete piers. The barges will be in the river executing the works and will be mostly stationary but, at times, there may be movement while

ferrying materials, equipment, and personnel.

The public is advised to adhere to “No wake” signs that will be erected to caution boaters to go slow when approaching the Haulover Bridge from both sides.

The ministry thanks the public for its cooperation in respecting and abiding by these safety precautions and exercising due attention and care when navigating through the worksite.



UDP calls for Museum to honor Mirna Manzanares



Kriol Dikshineri co-authors (L-r) Silvana Udz, Myrna Manzanares, Yvette Herrera

By William Ysaguirre

Cultural icon Myrna Manzanares, who passed away last December, deserved an official, state-endorsed funeral, the United Democratic Party (UDP)’s Leader Patrick Faber declared this week.

Manzanares, a founding member of the National Kriol Council and one of the co-authors of the first Kriol-English Dikshineri, was buried without an official funeral, a fact that Faber lamented at a UDP press conference held on Tuesday.

Faber noted that during the past UDP administration, the National Institute of Culture and History (N.I.C.H.) had stepped in to purchase Manzanares’ home for about \$110,000 when she was in

default on a loan, which she had borrowed from the Social Security Board.

Faber said the benign intention of N.I.C.H. was to allow Manzanares to live out the remainder of her days in the home, which would be turned into a museum honoring her works and achievements, after her death. The N.I.C.H. acquisition of the home became the subject of some debate in the House last April, when the Leader of Government business, Senator Hon. Eamon Courtenay, challenged the spending of public monies for this purpose.

Faber called on the present PUP government to follow suit on the N.I.C.H. initiative and to preserve

Manzanares’ home as a museum honoring Kriol culture and all things Kriol, which they have not done so far.

This should not be a problem, since the present Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology Hon. Francis Fonseca had joined the then N.I.C.H. director Yasser Musa and the king and queen of Brukdong music, Wilfred Peters (RIP) and Leela Vernon (RIP) for the launch of Manzanares’ “Kriol-English Dikshineri” at the House of Culture on October 21, 2007.

The list of other cultural icons who had received official funerals include Brukdong King Wilfred Peters, Brukdong Queen Leela Vernon, and Punta Rock musician Andy Palacio.

Weh Wi Ga Fi Seh

Kip sayf fahn di vairos!
Kip op yu helt.

Welkohn Migl a Janiwari 2022

Wi don deh da migl mont a Janiwari 2022. Disemba mi en op wid wahn big laas fi wi. Wi preshos Myrna Manzanares gaahn bak tu Faada Gaad. Ih spirit now deh wid Leela Vernon, Mista Peetaz, Mista Percy Reynolds, Aanarabl Philip Goldson, Ruby Marriot Perriot, Rosalle T. Staines (Oapn Paki) ahn aal di ada pipi weh mi help kip op Kriol kolcha joorin dehn taihn pahn Mada Ert. Soh, weh wi ku aal laan wen wi hafu seh gudbai tu wi preshos pipi? Dis da di laif lesn dehn mee di laan moa ahn moa evritaihn Faada Gaad kaal bak hoahn wan a mi pipi dehn:

Fain hapinis eena lee evriday ting.

Ih ku oanli haad haad haad fi du dis sohntain, speshali wid disya jratid koroanavairos. Sohn a wi ga moni ahn helt woriz. Pahn tap, sohn a wi famili ahn faamli di geh sik ahn sohn di wayk op ded. Mee tink seh evribadi noa sohnbadi weh don kech di vairos, er noa sohnbadi weh di vairos tek weh.

Eet helti ahn moov yu badi.

Mek wi eet moa helti ting. Pahn tap a dat, wi need fi geh lee eksasaiz. Yu ku eevn eksasaiz az yu di kleen! Wi don noa seh dat disya jratid koroanavairos lov atak pipi wid presha ahn shuga. Soh eet gud ahn lee eksasaiz gud fi aal a wi.

Tank Faada Gaad evriday.

Tank Faad Gaad fi si dis day ahn evriday. Nof pipi wi noa di wayk op ded dehnya dayz. Sohn seh dis vairos di tek weh pipi bifo dehn taihn. Bot maybi dis da dehn taihn eniway. Mi layt pa doz ga wahn ting ih doz seh: Eena English da dis: *My days were limited before they existed.* Eena Kriol, mee uda chranslayt dis laik: **Wen Ah fi wayk op ded mi don set bifo Ah mi eevn baan.**

Silvaana Udz, Ed.D. da fahn Bileez. If yu waahn tel shree bowt sohnting speshal fu put eena dis Kriol aatiki, eemayl: sudz142@gmail.com Vazit: www.nationalkriolcouncil.org

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-2022-02

Closing Date: January 28th, 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.

CSCPA invites 'dissident faction' to Court

By William Ysaguirre



CSCPA Chairman Vladimir Puck

"We'll see you in Court", Vladimir Puck, the chairman of the Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association (CSCPA), instructed his attorneys to write to dissident former CSCPA member Everaldo Uk, who now considers himself to be the new 'chairman elect' of the Association.

The CSCPA would



Everaldo Uk

let the courts decide the dispute, said Puck in a virtual press conference held on Monday afternoon, January 10.

Uk was elected by a group of cane farmers at a special annual general meeting of the CSCPA on Sunday, January 9. Despite Uk's demands that Puck and the incumbent CSCPA directors vacate the offices of the Association on Monday morning, Puck remains in control with support of about 50 CSCPA farmers who accompanied him to the office on Monday to ensure that Uk did not try to occupy the office by force.

The CSCPA expelled Uk last year for failure to abide by the Association's bylaws and regulations. Since then, 34 other CSCPA members have joined his ranks after they failed to re-register themselves as CSCPA members, when the Association held a registration exercise during the last out-of-crop season, even though they were given an extension up to a deadline in October.

Uk challenged the incumbent directors that they were in breach

of the Association's bylaws by their failure to hold elections. Puck denied this claim, saying the CSCPA had held elections in 2019, and the results were duly registered and validated by the Sugar Industry Control Board (SICB). Those directors were elected to a three-year term, so the next elections are due in October 2022. Things came to a head at the beginning of this year's crop, when Uk and the 34 other former members of the CSCPA found they could not deliver cane as CSCPA members and had to deliver their cane as independent farmers.

In an effort to reinstate themselves as members, Uk and his supporters applied to the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) for a permit to hold a special general meeting of the Association to conduct elections. The MOHW granted the permit on the eve of the meeting, apparently with tacit approval from the SICB Chairman Marcos Osorio.

The number of farmers who attended that meeting is unclear, as varying accounts place the number between

116 to 120 farmers. The vote was executed via secret ballot, and Uk was elected as the new chairman. The Police Department was present at the meeting only to ensure that law and order was maintained, and that the anti-COVID health regulations were observed.

But this number did not constitute a quorum, and Puck says that the 596 registered members of the CSCPA still support the current directors. Despite this, Uk served Puck with a letter advising him to vacate the Association's offices and that he was the newly elected 'chairman'. Puck and the other directors were unfazed by this challenge, and Uk's supporters speedily vacated the premises on Monday.

Puck said the Association hopes to hold elections by a democratic process according to their bylaws in October, providing the situation of the pandemic allows. They need to do this to preserve CSCPA's certification with the European Fair-Trade Association, which also pays a 'Fair Trade' premium on the Belizean sugar sold to the European Union. These funds go to help the individual farmers with chemicals for replanting, and the money came in very handy during the 2019 drought, when many farmers needed assistance after the seeds that they had planted failed to grow for lack of rain.

As to Uk's challenge, they will let the courts decide what is right and lawful.



Request for Proposal – Individual Contract for Training in Virtualization of Crime Data and Information Services

Background:

In Belize, the InfoSegura Project is being co-implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs & New Growth Industries, through the Belize Crime Observatory (BCO), in partnership with the UNDP. The BCO was established in October 2016 to "foster the development of public policies that address public safety and national security issues through the collection, analysis and dissemination of quality, timely and multidimensional data on crime and violence trends in the country."

The Ministry of Home Affairs & New Growth Industries places very high priority on innovation and technology, particularly in the context of leveraging Information and Communications Technology (ICT) resources to achieve greater impact through its efforts to improve citizen security in Belize. The Government of Belize has been developing the Plan Belize - Medium Term Development Strategy (2021-2025), and the two priority thematic areas most relevant to this Consultancy are Citizen Security and Good Governance.

The training programme to be developed through this Consultancy will strengthen Belize's technical capacity for virtualization of crime data and information services, contributing to the realization of Belize's Crime Intelligence Architecture (CIA) by 2023, as set out in the Belize Crime Observatory's Strategic Action Plan for the period 2020-2023. The activity will also strengthen the interagency sharing of crime data and information, through virtualization, providing more efficient service delivery across a wide arrange of network partners, thereby expediting the delivery of data and information to support faster interventions to improve public safety.

Objectives, Duties and Responsibilities:

A Specialist in Computer Science and/or Information Technology, Data Science, Information Systems and/or other closely related field is needed to develop a long-term sustainable training program that would:

1. Support innovation and technology through the virtualization and digitalization of crime data and information services, for rapid evidence-based decision-making and public policies;
2. Identify workable solutions for the implementation of strategies for innovation, virtualization, user experience, and digital tools.

The Consultant will:

- Attend a virtual inception meeting and submit a written plan for implementing this Consultancy.
- Perform specialized and generalized assessments for a well-rounded training program, to apply the 'train the trainer' approach to ensure long-term sustainability of the program while addressing existing gaps in skills and competencies.
- Design and implement an initial training series between March and August 2022 with modules that cover: (1) Virtualization, (2) Virtual school strategies (3) Virtual training from MOOC platforms and, (4) One-to-one capacity development.
- Integrate content that addresses the following thematic areas: (1) Data mining / Data discovery (2) Data-sharing (3) Evidence-based policies (4) Violence against women and girls (5) Measuring impact of policies and, (5) Measuring progress on SDG 16+.
- Deliver a final Consultancy Report.

Expected Outputs and Deliverables

The following will be the expected outputs:

1. Brief inception report and final work plan with updated budget submitted and approved.
2. Report of Specialized Assessment to identify inter-agency trainees / trainers to participate in the program, as well as Generalized Training Needs Assessment for interagency partners.
3. Development of Focused Training Plan for March to August 2022 and development of Syllabus for Customized Training.
4. Preparation of Course Content (including translation of content into English, where needed, and preparation of modules).
5. Delivery of agreed Training Courses during March to August 2022 and final technical report. The sessions should span no more than twenty-five (25) days. However, they may be spread over the 6-month duration of the consultancy. The exact schedule will be informed by the assessments

Qualification, Experience and Skills:

- A Master's Degree in Computer Science and/or Information Technology, Data Science, Information Systems and/or other closely related field.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in conducting training needs assessments at individual and institutional levels.
- Demonstrated knowledge and experience in developing and delivering training programmes.
- A well-rounded knowledge of virtualization / digitalization, data innovation technologies and methodologies for knowledge transfer using a 'train the trainer' approach to develop a long-term sustainable programme, to strengthen capacity in virtualization of crime data and information services.
- At least 5 years' experience working in these or a related field. Request for Proposal Package located:

Please download the RFP package at:

https://procurement-notices.undp.org/view_notice.cfm?notice_id=87087

or

<http://www.bz.undp.org/content/belize/en/home/operations/procurement.html/>

Submission of Application Package:

Proposals are required to submit by email or in 1 sealed envelope clearly labeled RFP: Training in Virtualization of Crime Data and Information Services

United Nations Development Programme

Attn: Procurement Associate

3rd Floor, Lawrence Nicholas Building, Belmopan

Cayo District, Belize, C.A.

Tel: (501) 822-2688, 0467, 4228

Email: procurement.bz@undp.org

Deadline for Application: Tuesday, January 18th, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.

UNDP is committed to achieving workforce diversity in terms of gender, nationality and culture. Individuals from minority groups, indigenous groups and persons with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply. All submissions will be treated with the strictest of confidence.

UNDP does not tolerate sexual exploitation and abuse, any kind of harassment, including sexual harassment, and discrimination.



Request for Bids (RFB) Belize

Protective Works Package 3 – Caye Caulker Palapa Garden Beach Redevelopment
 Loan No. 4426/OC-BL
 RFB No. 1 of 2022

- The Government of Belize has received a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank toward the cost of Climate Vulnerability Reduction Program and it intends to apply part of the proceeds of this loan to payments under the Contract for the Caye Caulker Palapa Garden Beach Redevelopment.
- The Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, Government of Belize now invites sealed bids from eligible and qualified bidders for the **Caye Caulker Palapa Garden Beach Redevelopment**. The works include the following: Construction of a 32m long retaining groyne and installation of three sand dunes. The dunes are to be surrounded by picket fences with a flip-latched gate for service entry. Planting of local vegetation on the dune surface to aid its ability to withstand the erosive forces of both wind and waves. Planting of mangroves along the seaward crest of the Groyne to increase its ability to protect the shoreline as well as increase the biodiversity and protect other ecosystems. **The construction period is three months.**
- The RFB will be conducted through the National Competitive Bidding (NCB) procedures specified in the *Inter-American Development Bank's Policies for the Procurement of Goods and Works financed by the Inter-American Development Bank GN-2349-15* approved by the Board of Executive Directors of the Bank on **2nd of July 2019 and effective 1st of January 2020** and is open to all bidders from Eligible Source Countries as defined in the bidding document.
- Interested eligible bidders may obtain further information from **Program Management Unit for the Climate Vulnerability Reduction Program – cvrp.4426.3@gmail.com AND mow.project4426@gmail.com** and inspect the bidding document at the address given below **First Floor, Project Execution Unit Building, Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing, #1 Power Lane, Belmopan, Cayo District** during working hours of **Monday to Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm (Belize time)**.
- Qualifications requirements include:**
 - Copies of original documents defining the constitution or incorporation, and principal place of business of the Bidder; certificate of Good Standing from the Belize Social Security Board, Belize Tax Services and Company's Registry, written power of attorney of the signatory of the Bid to commit the Bidder, and historical contract non-performance.
 - Total monetary value of construction works performed for **EACH** of the last five years shall be **BZ\$100,000 (cumulative BZ\$500,000)**.
 - Experience in works of a similar nature and size for each of the last five years, and details of works underway or contractually committed; and clients who may be contacted for further information on those contracts.
 - Listing of major construction equipment proposed to carry out the contract. Bidders must specify the conditions, numbers, type and availability, and ownership of the required equipment.
 - Qualifications and experience of key site management and technical personnel proposed for the Contract.

Position	Minimum Qualifications and Experience
Project Manager/Site Engineer	BSc. Civil Engineering, Hydraulic Engineering or related field - Five years' minimum experience in providing technical and civil engineering services for programs which include but are not limited to dredging/excavation, pier construction, building construction, construction of seawalls, stone revetments and/or groynes. - Five years' minimum experience in Project Management of Construction Works. - Registered Engineer with the Association of Professional Engineers in Belize
Survey Technician	Associate degree in Surveying and or/Land Information Technology or related field - 5 years' minimum experience in surveying of building and civil engineering works
Environmental Health and Safety Officer	Associate degree in Environmental Science or related field - Three years' experience in works of a similar nature related to Environmental, Health and Safety compliance
Foreman	- Diploma in Technical/Vocational Studies - Ten years' minimum experience in site supervision of building construction or any civil works which include but are not limited to dredging/excavation, piers, building construction, construction of seawalls, stone revetments and/or groynes

- Independently audited financial statements for the last three years (2018 - 2020);
 - Evidence of working capital for this Contract (access to line(s) of credit and availability of other financial resources): **BZ\$175,000** (of which BZ\$75,000 must be in cash from a financial institution)
 - Authorization to seek references from the Bidder's Bankers;
 - Information regarding any litigation, current or during the last three years;
 - Proposals for subcontracting components of the work amounting to more than ten percent of the contract price. A margin of preference for national contractors/JVCAs shall not be applied.
 - And any other documents or information as stipulated in the Bidding Documents for Work Package 3.
- A complete set of Bidding Documents in English may be obtained by interested bidders on the submission of a written Application to the address below.
 - Bids must be delivered to the address below at or before **10:00 a.m. (local Belize time) on February 10th, 2022**. Electronic bidding shall not be permitted. Late bids will be rejected. Bids will be opened physically in the presence of the bidders' representatives who choose to attend in person or on-line at the address below at **10:30 a.m. (local Belize time) on February 10th, 2022**.
 - All bids shall be accompanied by a Bid Security of **twenty-five thousand Belize dollars (BZ \$25,000.00)**.
 - The address referred to above is:
 Attention:
Mr. Rolando Chan
Program Coordinator
Climate Vulnerability Reduction Program
Program Management Unit
1st Floor, Project Execution Unit Building
Power Lane, Belmopan , Cayo District, BELIZE
Tel: 501-822-1942
Email: cvrp.4426.3@gmail.com AND
cc: mow.project4426@gmail.com

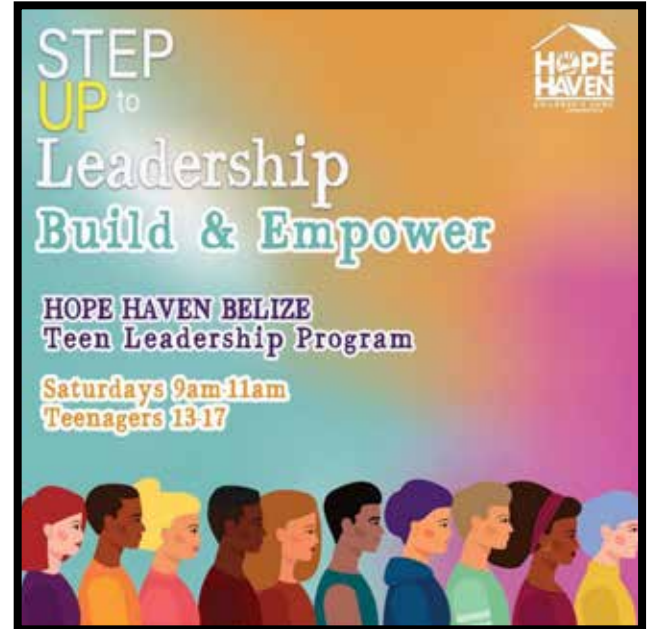
Hope Haven Belize: Step up to Leadership!

By Javan Flowers

Hope Haven Belize is set to host an interactive leadership seminar on Saturday, January 15th, which aims to empower youth to develop and advance their leadership skills and allow them to foster positivity within their lives.

Speaking with The Reporter, coach Briseidi Molina, the host of the seminar, detailed how she intends to achieve the seminar's goals. "To create a positive environment, the 'Step Up to Leadership!' initiative was created," she explained. "Hope Haven Belize introduces 12 interactive sessions that will empower teens to advance their leadership ability and ensure that each participant takes charge in all facets of their lives: at home, at their church, at school, at clubs and sports teams."

Molina added, "Teenagers who attend our training complete several processes throughout the sessions that challenge them on a



range of skills like teamwork, focus, communication, and Self-Awareness. Youth will be able to think critically about their personal leadership styles and strengths, while also reflecting on the purpose of 'leadership' in their lives and in their communities. Understanding the process involved in leading oneself, and others, enables young people to be confident in their roles and to navigate their own path."

These sessions are designed for teenagers 13-17 years old. It will be held in Hope Haven's Domestic Outreach Center located near the

Holy Cross Anglican Primary School at the entrance of the San Mateo area, San Pedro Town.

The first session commences on Saturday, January 15th, from 9:00 am - 11:00 am. All prospective participants are advised that COVID-19 protocols are to be adhered to during sessions.

For further information regarding the seminar, and how to register your child, you may contact coach Briseidi Molina at (+501) 629-9237 or message Hope Haven Belize via Instagram or Facebook at @hopehavenbelize.

VACANCY

Dr. Lesly Perez has open vacancies for qualified personal in the following fields bellow:

- Cook
- Baby sitter

Address: Bougainvillea Street, Orange Walk Town.

For any further information please call # 322-0899.

NOTICE OF DISSOLUTION

Notice is hereby given to all interested parties that the below company has been dissolved and struck off the International Business Companies Register.

Company Name	Date of Dissolution
RINK WORLDWIDE CORPORATION	6th January 2022

Intershore (Belize) Limited
 Registered Agent

Qualified staff best for San Ignacio/Santa Elena

By William Ysaguirre

San Ignacio and Santa Elena residents elected a mixed Town Council in March 2021, with a UDP mayor and one councilor and five PUP councilors, and their discord led both sides to call press conferences in Belize City on Monday and Tuesday, January 10-11.

One main bone of contention was the hiring of a new Town Administrator, with the PUP five taking offence when Mayor Earl Trapp Jr. refused to hire a PUP applicant whose only academic qualification is a high school diploma.

The minimum qualification for the post is a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, as clearly stated when the post was advertised last December, he explained, and the previous administrator had a PhD.

Horace Grant's one-page résumé also showed he was the least qualified of the 13 or 14 applicants, and that he had not held a regular job since 2008.

Trapp recalled the many improvements which previous UDP Town Council had achieved since he was first elected Mayor in 2015. He called on the PUP five to dedicate more time to their respective portfolios and responsibilities as councilors, and to direct their energies to finding sources of funding for new town projects, rather than wasting time on these petty grievances.

For their part, the PUP five councilors defended Grant's application, saying he had over 25 years' experience in government service, and had received some training in accounting through courses from the World Bank in 1990. They also accused the Mayor of nepotism for the many family members he has on the town payroll, when they called a press conference at Independence Hall on Monday.

San Ignacio Deputy Mayor Matthew



Mayor Earl Trapp

Preston complained of a lack of transparency and accountability, and that there could not be any proper check and balance, when the Mayor has relatives employed as the cashier, procurement officer, operations manager, I.T. technician, driver, vehicle inspector, and several more in the maintenance department.

The other councilors would like to employ other persons who are not in the Mayor's pocket, particularly, for the posts involving the management of the Town finances, for better transparency, they say.

Preston said there was a clear conflict of interest when these employees' salaries amounted to \$250,000 per year, and that together they were earning an average of \$4,000 per month in overtime.

Mayor Trapp defended this situation, saying that these employees are hard-working and reliable, willing to go the extra mile, and to put in a full day's work when called upon to work on weekends. He also recognized that Belize is a small country, a small community, and almost everyone is somehow related to others, however distant the family connection may be.

Senator Darrel Bradley, attorney at law, also weighed in on Trapp's arguments based on his experience as Belize City Mayor. He said there has been a concerted effort across the country to improve the performance of all municipalities in Belize, by the establishment of Municipal Services

regulations which all the Town councils signed on to.

This specifies the minimum requirements for all staff in all municipalities, particularly the qualifications which



Senator Darrell Bradley

the Town Administrator must have. The Town Councils Act defines the Town Administrator's duties that he must be the custodian of the council's funds, and be able to supervise all staff. He noted that

since the advertisement had also set a minimum qualification for the Town Administrator, the Town council was under an obligation to treat all applicants fairly, and only those with the minimum of a

Bachelor's in Business Administration should be considered.

He said it would have raised eyebrows and been considered ultra vires for the San Ignacio Town Council to consider an applicant who did not meet the minimum requirement as this would have appeared discriminatory and clearly showed bias. Even though the PUP five were willing to bend this rule for a PUP supporter.

Mayor Trapp defended his position at a press conference called by Opposition Leader Hon. Patrick Faber at the UDP secretariat on Youth for the Future Drive on Tuesday morning.



VACANCY: JOB OPPORTUNITY

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

IT SUPPORT TECHNICIAN

Reports to: IT Supervisor

Summary of Responsibilities: The IT Service Desk is the central point of contact for all IT related incidents and service requests. The role of the IT Support Technician is to provide second line support for all team members Port of Belize Limited. An IT Support Technician is responsible for resolving complex support requests with computer hardware, software, and network systems, as well as meeting customer satisfaction and continuous service delivery demands. Provides research and support for new technologies to be used within our environment. IT Support staff work in a dynamic, fast-paced environment which provides services over the phone, through e-mail, phone, and in person.

Job Responsibilities:

1. Diagnose and resolve software and hardware incidents, including operating system and across a range of software applications.
2. Assist all users with any logged IT related incident when called upon.
3. Manage IT Department Inventory and Provide Monthly report.
4. Upgrade Windows Operating systems and Microsoft office applications.
5. Active Directory Management - Create and Manage Domain User accounts.
6. Administrate TOS (Terminal Operating System) OCTOPI and CMMS.
7. Coordinate with Software Vendors regarding application issues and new features, roll outs, etc.
8. Supervised daily backups and test weekly/monthly backup integrity.
9. Manage and control the implementation of new IT systems, and the ongoing refinement of existing systems.
10. Ensuring that systems and applications are optimized and effective, and that necessary support skills are in place.
11. Able to manage and troubleshoot VLANS Networking issues (Local Network, Surveillance Network, and VOIP network)
12. Able to run and create queries in SQL and produce reports when needed undertaking other duties not specially stated which from time to time are necessary without altering the nature or level of responsibility.
13. You are required to assist the IT support functions at other Waterloo Investment Holdings Ltd. entities from time to time any other duties that may be assigned of a related nature.

Job qualifications/Requirements:

- Associates Degree or equivalent Technical Certificates
- Minimum 3-5 years' experience in (VOIP, VLANS, Network, Protocols, Virtual Environment-SQL/VB, MS Server environment, Windows Operating System)
- Knowledgeable in SQL/VB or equivalent (3-5 years) database/application development & manipulation

Skills/Competencies:

- Ability to work independently
- Able to work flexible hours
- Strong analytical skills
- Critical Thinker

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 record, name and phone number of two (2) previous employers.

Applications should be emailed to:

jobapplications@portofbelize.com

Closing date for receipt of applications is Monday, January 31st, 2022.

Belize ranks 95th on “Legatum Prosperity Index”

By Javan Flowers

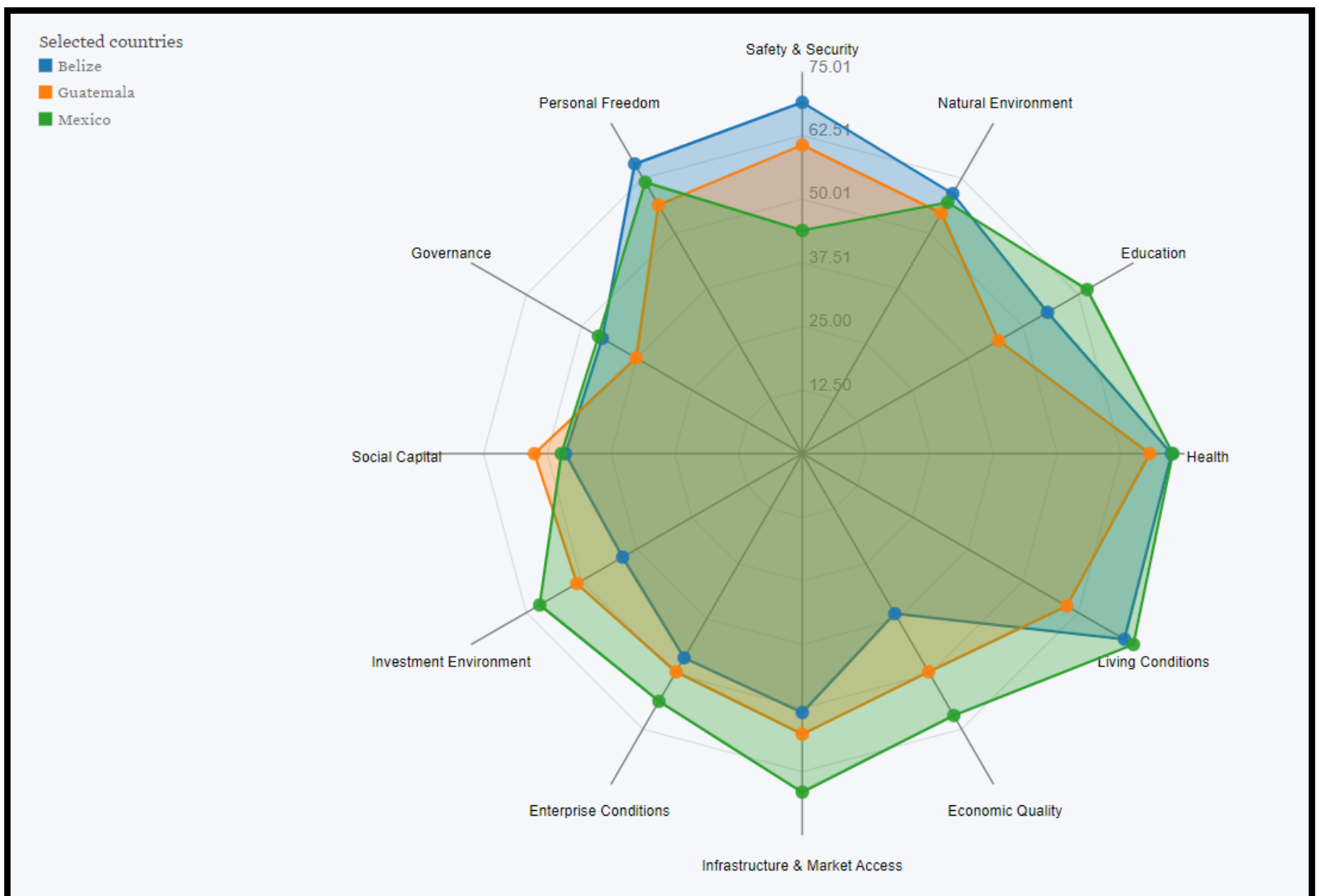
Belize ranks 95th out of 167 countries in The Legatum Prosperity Index, falling eight positions since 2011.

The Legatum Prosperity Index was developed by the Legatum Institute, an independent educational charity founded and part-funded by the private investment firm Legatum. The Legatum Prosperity Index is a framework that assesses countries on the promotion of their residents’ economic and social wellbeing.

The index uses extensive data to determine how each country stands by finding the final average of 12 scores derived from 12 “pillars” and subsequently compares each country’s score, giving them their position in the index.

These 12 pillars include Safety/Security, Personal Freedom, Governance, Social Capital, Investment Environment, Enterprise Conditions, Infrastructure/Market Access, Economic Quality, Living Conditions, Health, Education, and Natural Environment.

Belize’s rank of 95th was determined using the scores obtained



in the 12 respective “pillars.”

Belize’s highest score comes from the Natural Environment pillar, which measures the aspects of the physical environment, where it’s ranked 51st of 167 countries.

Belize also placed 55th and 80th for Personal Freedom and Safety/Security, respectively. The Safety/Security pillar is the degree to which war, conflict, terror, and crime have destabilized individuals’ security.

The Personal Freedom pillar measures progress towards fundamental legal rights, individual liberties, and social tolerance.

On the lower end of the scores determined lay the Investment Environment pillar, which measures the extent to which investments are adequately protected and readily accessible. Belize is ranked 125th.

Scores determined to be even lower than this were the pillars of

Social Capital, which measure the strength of personal and social relationships, institutional trust, social norms, and civic participation in a country. Also, Economic Quality measures how well an economy is equipped to generate wealth sustainably and with the full engagement of the workforce. The scores for the aforementioned pillars were 134th and 144th, respectively.

Other notable scores included the pillars for

Health, Governance, and Education, of which Belize was ranked 82nd, 93rd, and 98th, respectively.

It is worth noting that Belize was ranked eight positions lower ten years ago, ranking 87th of 167 countries, but despite the overall loss in position, the most significant improvement compared to a decade ago came in Safety/Security.

The report concluded by highlighting that there exist bright lights in a world of

stagnating prosperity. Sub-Saharan Africa has shown modest but consistent progress, despite a deterioration in the continent’s safety and security. The prosperity of 40 of 54 countries on the continent improved over the past decade, and the rate of extreme poverty has dropped across the region from 49.9% to 42.3% of the population. Much of this progress has been driven by steady improvements in Health and Infrastructure.

S U D O K U

Medium Puzzle

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

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.

Answer to Puzzle

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

RES PUBLICA

Westminster's Systemic Catch 22: an executive of 'GOATS' vs. Politicians

This article was originally written in October 2016. However, it is republished in this week's Res Publica360 as, save for a few details, the spirit of the content remains applicable, particularly given the recent call by the UDP to appoint an "outsider" Health Minister.

"For many, 'representation' is synonymous with political reward, or patronage. Ministerial posts are also now used as a means of ensuring loyalty, or at least acceptance of the government approach. Prime Ministers wish to appoint those who are loyal: both to the party and to his or her own position as party leader."--(Young and Hazel, 2011).

In my childhood years I could only recall a maximum of four times when my mother felt it was necessary to reprimand me in true Belizean style. One of those times occurred when I was about eight years old, and I decided to jokingly throw politically charged obloquies at our neighbour whose relation to a highly ranked area representative made him a "politically exposed" person (if I may use that term loosely).

His name was brought up in the media for having been implicated in a form of corruption. And I, as a young child, having watched it on the news and seen the newspaper headlines, commented on it amongst my friends one weekend morning, while in my own yard. To my defence, it might have well been a form of literary apostrophe, given that I'm certain the subject of my criticism (a much older man to whom I'd obviously show respect) was unable to hear me. Nonetheless, once the news of my actions reached my mother's ear, I was found guilty.

For the most part, this story has become one of the many ingredients for jocular episodes of familial reminiscence; but I bring it up here simply to point out one obvious fact: the topic of corruption has been a constantly recurring topic within the public sphere for decades. An eight-year-old version of myself would take one back twenty-three years. I can quite LITERALLY say I have grown up hearing about corruption in politics.

The Core of the Problem

Maybe it's a symptom of being a millennial, but I find it utterly ridiculous that this one issue tends to reappear almost like clockwork over the bulk of our post-independence political life as a country. More importantly, the forms of corruption are almost identical in many aspects, with only the names and faces being substituted.

Corruption is a chronic disease that is so systematic that one could almost design a mathematical model to predict how and when certain issues would come up. It is this systematic nature that has led me to the sound belief that this chronic disease is systemic.

Like all chronic diseases, it has been a long-term problem and it is caused by lifestyle risk factors that demand behavioural changes. For instance, one of the most common examples of chronic illness could be seen in the strong positive correlation between tobacco smoking and lung cancer. If one wishes to minimize his risks of becoming a lung-cancer patient, the requisite behavioural change would be to quit smoking, which could be classified as one of the core problems.

Keeping with the analogy, then, what would be among the primary risk factors for the corruption cancer? If we agree that simply changing the brand of cigarette you smoke wouldn't be enough to lower risks, but rather it's breaking the habit completely, then why is it that that is what we do with our politics?

Changing the "brand" of politicians (i.e. Red vs. Blue vs. Yellow vs. Green), in my view, is quite pointless. It's the very Westminster-style of

parliamentary democracy that we've inherited from the United Kingdom that requires some attention. Said differently, the core of the chronic problem is not predominantly the politician (they're human so expect them to be corruptible); it is the very "brand" of politics we utilize.

The Inherent Flaws of the Westminster System

Now, let me be clear here. I am not recommending a presidential system akin to that found in the United States, but rather suggesting plausible amendments to our parliamentary system.

Like any parliamentary democracy, the government of the day must enjoy the confidence of the Legislature. The Prime Minister is generally chosen from the party that has obtained the "majority" of votes. This practice can become a bit more complex when the country in question employs proportional representation as opposed to the first-past-the-post voting system found in Belize. But the conversation of the former versus the latter would be saved for another day.

The focus here is as it pertains to the so-called 'separation of powers' doctrine. In Belize, like many parliamentary democracies, most Cabinet ministers are chosen from a limited pool of area representatives who are members of the House of Representatives. Even if an 'outsider' is brought in as a minister, our Constitution mandates that he be

also quoted from the UK's Public Administration Select Committee (2009):

"[T]he underlying problem seems to be that the system of political reward—the allocation of ministerial roles—is not directly related to an assessment of the actual requirements of government. Appointment to ministerial office is instead used for other purposes, including recognition of political loyalty" (Young and Hazel, 2011, p. 13).

Anyone who regularly tracks local news would be fully aware that this mindset has taken hold, at least in a de facto sense, in Belize. We saw this come up recently when the Ministry of Natural Resources was taken from the then Deputy Prime Minister Gaspar Vega and given over to Senator Godwin Hulse. (It has since been given to Senator Vanessa Retreage, another "outsider").

I will not enter into speculations into the specifics of how that case led to the current status of Gaspar Vega. However, given the nature of parliamentary democracies, it would be safe to say that such speculations are not without their merits. Even Hazel and Young, whose study involved several interviews with former "Outsiders", put it this way:

"The fact that these outsider ministers had not come from a political party or through the traditional recruitment path sometimes put them at

Table 2.1 Ministerial Roles^{3v}

Policy	Executive/ Managerial	Political	Public Relations
Agenda-setting	Departmental management	Advocacy of department's position in:	Overseeing dept's relations with:
Policy initiation	Decision taker	• Cabinet	• Interest groups
Policy selection		• Parliament	• Public
Policy legitimation		• European Union	• Media
		• party	

appointed to the Senate.

At this point I'd like to return to the quote at the beginning of this article taken from a 2011 report entitled "Putting Goats among Wolves: Appointing Ministers from Outside Parliament" and written by Dr. Ben Young and Professor Robert Hazel of the University College of London (UCL)'s Department of Political Science. (Please note the term "GOATS" is an acronym for "Government of All Talents", and references 'outside' of parliament ministers).

Hazel and Young wrote: "For many, 'representation' is synonymous with political reward, or patronage. Ministerial posts are also now used as a means of ensuring loyalty, or at least acceptance of the government approach. Prime Ministers wish to appoint those who are loyal: both to the party and to his or her own position as party leader."--(Young and Hazel, 2011).

The duo—whose report was designed to take a comparative look at the overall performance of ministers of cabinet chosen from outside parliament (Outsiders) and those who were from among career politicians—raised this point several times throughout their study. In one instance, they

a disadvantage. One outsider minister complained that jealousy caused by thwarted ambition sometimes spilled over into team relations. He could never be sure if he would be backed up by the party. ... Many working peers thought membership in the party was a prerequisite: it ensured loyalty" (Young and Hazel, 2011, p. 39).

Now, this experience was from the mother of our parliamentary democracy, so we should not have been surprised at the rumours regarding the difficulties that Hulse may have had with many of his Cabinet colleagues. To begin with, it was risky for Prime Minister Dean Barrow to appoint Hulse. Is there any surprise that he's so reluctant to remove him to meet the demands of the Belize National Teachers' Union (BNTU)? But that too is another matter for another time.

Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair also addressed the pervasive nature of this ministerial rewards system in his biography:

"Also, a prime minister or president is always engaged in a kind of negotiation over the state of their party that requires people's ambitions to be

Cont'd on pg 11

RES PUBLICA

Westminster's Systemic Catch 22: an executive of 'GOATS' vs. Politicians

Cont'd from pg 10

assuaged. ... If you don't promote someone, after a time, they resent you. If you promote them, you put someone else out, and then that person resents you. You look for an elaborate index of methods to keep the offloaded aside, but let me tell you from experience: it never works.Unless you give them something that really is spectacular as an alternative to being a minister, then they aren't fooled [...] So, you have to reshuffle" (Blair, 2010).

So there you have it. The very structure leads to the playing of politics with our ministerial posts, which essentially means playing politics with the governance of our resources.

Enter Clientelism

Of course, this feature of our politics shows up even on the campaign trail. Any voter who had ever had a candidate make promises regarding land or house or the like has basically dealt with someone that promised based on his expected position within Cabinet, which speaks to his stewardship of or access to the country's resources.

Consequently, myriads could be said here about the potential bedlam that occurred that day when Hulse was named as Minister of Natural Resources, and the subsequent reports of area representatives weakened abilities to fulfill some of those "promises". This inability to easily fulfill some campaign promises (not just land promises) to one's constituents placed some parliamentarians' seat in some jeopardy. Now, let's recall that in a parliamentary democracy, the government of the day has to enjoy the "confidence" of the legislature; therefore, politicians would view any threat to their ability to win in their constituency as a big problem.

But why wouldn't they be able to win in their constituencies if they cannot make those promises as easily? Why can't they promise the masses of voters in their respective constituencies that they'll fight for policies that are best for them and the country as a whole? I mean policies matter, right?

Certainly the average Belizean voter would say to a candidate: "Look, don't promise me that YOU will get my house fixed; don't YOU say you'll work to get me a piece of land; tell me that you and your party will make the requisite policy changes that would enable me or any Belizean to benefit from such things because the system would be designed in such a way for such to be possible." That's not likely given the immediate needs of many voters who'd lack incentives to opt for a 'policy' promise that would be slower than a direct ministerial intervention.

Therein lies the rub, yet again! Here we have laid the perfect foundation for an all around spoiler system to flourish, leading to the manifestations of what former Lake-I representative Mark King encapsulated in one phrase: "UDP first, Belizeans second, and PUP last".

Is there a Solution?

Unlike the United Kingdom, parliamentary democracies such as Sweden, The Netherlands, and France are known for appointing outsiders to Cabinet. Actually, the constitutions of these countries demand that a member of any House of Parliament should resign before taking up any ministerial post.

Yes, as Young and Hazel (2011) pointed out, in more recent years, a larger number of ministers have some parliamentary background, thereby, increasing the politicization of Cabinets while simultaneously decreasing the professionalization of the same, but this does not make the principle itself devoid of logic and inherent usefulness.

At the end of their report, Young and Hazel, presented mixed results. "The comparative experience provides little in the way of evaluation. Are those appointed via a non-parliamentary route 'better' than those appointed via a parliamentary route?" They added. "There is no hard data to provide a basis for comparison; and some of the more important criteria for such an evaluation is inevitable subjective" (Young and Hazel, 2011, p. 85).

Said differently, the outsider ministers were able to do the job. Please note, however, that Young and Hazel did not discuss corruption; they looked at performance on the job. Extending the "outsider" concept to corruption is a bit of an extrapolation of their ideas.

What is a Minister's Job?

In the most professional sense, a minister's job could be categorized into four main roles: the policy role, the executive/managerial function, the political roles, and the public relations aspects.

The "Outsiders" were found by Young and Hazel's study to do well with the policy and executive/managerial functions. More precisely, the study said 'outsiders' "reveled in the policy function." That, however, should come as no surprise as these outside experts were brought into government for the purpose of management and policy implementation.

The technocratic ministers, however, were found to be weakest at the parliamentary politics. The study also showed that they had some difficulty in dealing with the media and other interest groups, which fall within the public relations component of their job descriptions.

What Matters Most?

If I would have to choose which of those four general functions ought to be prioritised, my list, in descending order of importance would have to be as follows: Policy and Executive/Managerial Function tied for first place, Public Relations second, and lastly, the Political Roles.

Unlike Sweden, The Netherlands and France whose electoral systems are a bit more complicated (and parliament much larger in terms of members) and at times made up of coalition governments, Belize's structure is fairly simple. Therefore, I see less need for a minister to possess political and parliamentary skills. In terms of public relations, that skill can easily be taught in a series of training sessions for new ministers, or delegated to a communications team within the given ministry.

But, if we wish to continuously gripe about the need for efficiency in governance, then the Policy and Executive Functions should indeed be a priority.

Let there be Outsiders

Now, here's where my ideals deviate from the points and recommendations raised by Young and Hazel (2011), who suggested that Cabinet ministers should be "hybrids": "candidates who have both technocratic and political skills" (or a so-called 'policrat', if you will).

While many Cabinet ministers in the aforementioned countries were once members of parliament, my definition of "outsiders" would be almost exclusively of technocrats that are completely "above politics", and preferably chosen based almost entirely on their expertise in the ministerial portfolio.

In terms of going about selecting a would-be minister, I agree with Young and Hazel that the Prime Minister should still be the one to select his ministers. However, in terms of having accountability on their appointments, these nominees should be made to sit in pre-appointment

hearings held by the relevant House Committees. For example, a would-be 'outsider' minister of Natural Resources would have to be interviewed (maybe even publicly) by the Natural Resources and Environment Committee that would assess the candidates' qualifications.

A bad review shouldn't preclude the Prime Minister from still proceeding with the appoint; however, a public bad review could serve to discourage the Prime Minister from making such an appointment (Young and Hazel 2011, p. 87). Of course, this has the double effect of forcing the Prime Minister to seek out the best candidates possible.

Potential Outcome?

Immediately, the pros and cons of such a change become apparent. In my estimation, the society at large would benefit first of all from ministers who are actually mavens in their specific portfolios. Policies would be more thought out and its implementation expedited. More importantly, the country's resources would supposedly be managed more efficiently.

On the political side, it disrupts the foundation of clientelism discussed above, as an area representative—no longer guaranteed a seat in Cabinet—will have to focus on national (cross-the-board) policies over 'spoiler' promises, and minimising much of the inequality that is prevalent under any system where clientelism prevails. From a corruption standpoint, it's my firm belief that the systemic corruption also begins at this level.

Of course, on the negative side, this removes the "reward-punishment" powers of the Prime Minister in parliament. As Young and Hazel (2011, p. 28) put it:

"Members of the government [who would also be members of parliament] themselves have no choice but to vote for the government: they vote against and they lose their government office. ... Ministerial office becomes a gift of patronage as much as an office with substance."

This would mean that a prime minister would have to attract people who are loyal to his cause to join his ranks. He wouldn't be able to easily "penalize" them for voting out of line. And therein lies the perfect Catch 22 scenario: to form government in a parliamentary democracy, a Prime Minister needs his 'merry men' who traditionally need an incentive to stay loyal. But this structure of 'ministerial rewards and punishment' leads to its own problems that hurt the masses.

In the End

Ultimately, the Belizean people would have to decide how long they'd like to remain in a system that engenders behaviours that lead to chronic corruption and inefficiencies. But, like the tobacco smoker who'd have to quit his habit or addiction, the withdrawal symptoms would not be pleasant at first.

Naturally, for such a system of "outsiders" to work a lot of Constitutional amendments may be necessary, and certainly there are some finer points in other laws that we'd have to look at. However, no one said reform is easy. But let's see if 23 years from now some other parent's eight-year-old child would still be talking about corruption in their yard, and later grow up to write another blog on a similar, if not the same, topic.

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Chebat out, Bernard in Bernard at MOHW

By Javan Flowers

The Briceño Administration has replaced Hon. Michel Chebat with Hon. Kevin Bernard, who now takes the lead of the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) lead, announced a government release this week.

The release informed that over the last few weeks Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño conducted a comprehensive first-year review of national conditions, Cabinet portfolio performance, and leadership effectiveness. As a result of these assessments, Prime Minister Briceño determined that the following portfolio adjustments would enhance Cabinet's administration while advancing key governance goals.

Chebat will now serve as Minister of Public Utilities and Logistics.

Readers would recall the abrupt departure of CEO Deysi Mendez in November of last year. Mendez's sudden departure at the time was reported to be because of "personality



(Clockwise) Hon. Michel Chebat, Hon. Rodwell Ferguson, and Hon. Kevin Bernard

differences" between her and the Minister of Health.

Subsequently, Dr. Guerra was tapped for the senior post; however, reliable reports to our newsroom suggested that while Dr. Guerra was expected to sign her contract in December, she ultimately did not feel comfortable taking the job.

Hon. Rodwell Ferguson also saw his portfolio changed as he now serves as Minister of Transport, Youth and Sports.

The release also saw minor additions to some Ministers' portfolios.

Hon. Francis Fonseca will, in addition to his current responsibilities, serve as minister responsible for E-Governance, while Hon. Henry Charles Usher will add to his responsibilities as Minister of the Public Service, Constitutional and Political Affairs the responsibility for religious affairs.

Operationally, the Office of the Prime Minister will now assume coordination for the National Security Council.

All other ministerial and minister of state appointments remain in place.

Medical experts warn Omicron may be more severe for children

By Javan Flowers

As primary schools reopen, parents are on edge as they weigh the risks that come with sending their children back into the classroom; however, Covid-19's omicron variant appears to be affecting children under age 7 in a new way: a harsh, barking cough known as croup.

While croup generally is not harmful, it can be frightening for parents already on edge about their children, who are too young for the Covid-19 vaccine, becoming infected with the virus.

Doctors say this is most likely occurring because it appears omicron tends to settle higher up in

the respiratory tract, rather than deeper in the lungs.

Speaking with NBC News, Dr. Buddy Creech, a pediatric infectious disease expert and director of the Vanderbilt Vaccine Research Program at the Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville, Tennessee, explained that "Little kids' airways are so narrow that it takes far less inflammation to clog them. When a child

with tiny, inflamed airways breathes, it makes a distinctive noise, and can result in a cough that sounds like a dog or a seal."

Several seasonal viruses, including parainfluenza and respiratory syncytial virus, can lead to croup and an infection of the respiratory tract called bronchiolitis. Now it seems, COVID-19—specifically the omicron variant—should be added to that list.



PUBLIC AUCTION SALE: AQUACULTURE HATCHERY

BY ORDER of the Chargees, Messrs. Alpha Gamma Financial Services Limited, Licensed Auctioneer, Fernando Molina, will sell ONLINE via beacon-auctions.com the following properties: Block Nos. 212A, 214A, 217A and 221, situated north of the Dangriga Town Municipal Airstrip, approximately 0.17 miles north of San Jose Road, in the land formerly known as Carib Reserve, Stann Creek District, being the freehold property of Aquablue Farms Ltd., TOGETHER with all buildings and erections thereon in one lot by way of public auction.



Total Land Area: 127 acres

For full legal description of property please visit website.

Buildings & improvements: 3 buildings (a. 12,750 sq ft. reinforced concrete structure w/ upper portion constructed with steel frame with aluminum sheeting walls. b. 12,750 sq ft. reinforced concrete structure w/ upper portion constructed with steel frame with aluminum sheeting walls. c. 2 storey, 1,600 sq ft. building containing office space on the **Ground Floor** and **Second Floor** containing an apartment with 1 living, dining, and kitchen area, 2 bedrooms, 1 bathroom and a laundry.) suitable for aquaculture hatchery / commercial use.

TERMS: STRICTLY CASH

Bids are currently being accepted and sale will expire on 31 January, 2022 at time shown on the website.

For further particulars on the properties or to schedule a viewing, please contact:

Email: bids@beacon-auctions.com

Website: beacon-auctions.com

Tel: 610-0919

Support for Africa's Vaccine Production is Good for the World

By *Kristalina Georgieva*

The start of a new year is often a time to reflect and reassess. As the pandemic stretches into its third year, apprehension over the health crisis and the associated economic uncertainties is proving hard to shake.

So, for anyone hoping to restore their sense of optimism, I have a simple recommendation: **Consider Africa**

In early December, I travelled to the region—my first time since the COVID19 outbreak—and had the opportunity to visit Senegal and the Democratic Republic of Congo. I witnessed first-hand the creativity, energy, and entrepreneurial spirit that the region is bringing to bear in overcoming this crisis.

My visit to the Institut Pasteur in Dakar, in particular, was one of these inspirations. The Institut is already a world-class leader in the fight against infectious diseases, having attracted and trained international and regional specialists. Now, the staff there are leading the way to address Africa's immediate COVID19 challenge. They are also building the region's capacity to fight future pandemics and meet Africa's more routine immunization needs.

It is critical the region has the tools and the necessary funds to build capacity to produce and manufacture vaccines. This need is especially acute given that the overall COVID vaccination rate on the continent is still below 10 percent. As Africa faces a fourth wave of infections, the emergence of the Omicron variant is yet another reminder

that the region's ability to equip itself to fight this pandemic and address future healthcare needs has global implications.

Meeting today's needs

Notwithstanding the impressive efforts of the Institut Pasteur, for now, Africa remains reliant on COVID19 vaccine imports and donations. The most immediate priority must be to guarantee predictability in vaccine deliveries—including through COVAX and the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT). Funding will also be needed to ensure that Africa's health systems can vaccinate the local population swiftly as new supplies arrive, including through outreach efforts to reiterate the importance of vaccines and reduce misinformation and vaccine hesitancy. Beyond vaccines, the region requires access to tests, treatments, and protective equipment.

Last year, IMF staff proposed a plan to end the pandemic, by vaccinating 40 percent of the population of all countries by end-2021 and 70 percent** by mid-2022. Progress has been impressive, but the world must do better. The distribution of vaccines and other tools continues at two alarmingly different speeds. In Africa, for instance, only seven countries reached the 40 percent target in 2021 and, for many, the 70 percent target seems increasingly ambitious.

All of this will require further cooperation and support from the international community. Closing the \$23 billion financing gap of the Access to COVID19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, for example, would be a welcome first step, as a sizable portion of this effort is directed toward Africa. And progress toward vaccine

equity is not just a matter of addressing vaccine supply; countries also need more support to strengthen 'last mile' delivery.

To be clear, this international support is not charity. This is a global public good! As we all know by now, no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Building resilience for the future

But we must not let efforts to meet urgent needs come at the expense of future needs. Boosting resilience for the future is also a priority—including the region's capacity to provide for itself, against COVID19 or any other disease that may arise in the future. Without predictable and reliable vaccine supplies, for example, health authorities are often forced to react at short notice to accept doses, often with limited shelf lives, greatly complicating delivery logistics for already-stretched health systems. In short, true resilience in Africa cannot depend on the repeated generosity of the international community. It requires scaled-up local manufacturing capacity and strengthened regional supply chains.

Africa vaccinating Africa is necessary—and it is achievable.

Vaccine manufacturing is a sophisticated enterprise that requires specialized equipment, inputs, storage facilities, and skilled labor. But anyone who tells you that this cannot be done in Africa has not been paying attention.

The work of the Institut Pasteur in Dakar offers a glimpse of the region's ambitions in the global effort against disease. With financial assistance from the United States, European Union, and international foundations—along with the savvy use of some of Senegal's recent SDR allocation—construction of a new manufacturing facility is already underway. When complete, this will be one of the first start-to-finish factories on the continent, and a potentially critical component in Africa's COVID19 and other vaccine supply.

And the Institut is far from the only center of excellence in the region—it is part of an impressive Africa-wide health and science community that is making an invaluable contribution to global health—including, most recently, discovering and sequencing the Omicron variant. Currently, there are 12 production facilities, either in operation or in the pipeline, across six African countries—Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, and South Africa—that are expected to produce a wide range of COVID19 vaccines.

Global public good

As we contemplate the new year, it is increasingly clear that a robust and reliable vaccine capacity in Africa is a global public good that deserves global support. For the current crisis or for future pandemics, we all have a stake in Africa's success.

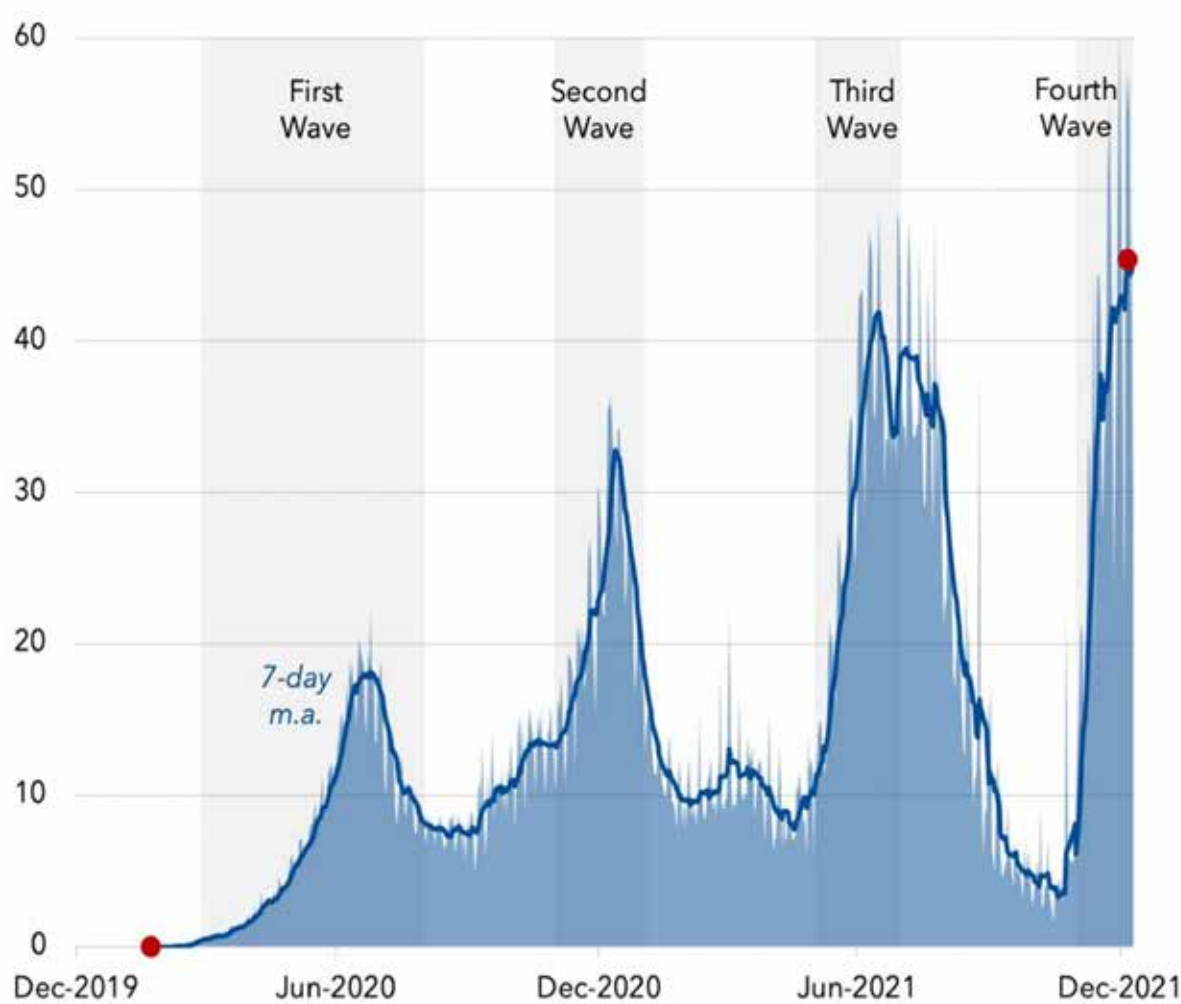
I have no doubt that Africa is up to the task. But the international community can—and must—help by stepping up cross-border collaboration in science; incentivizing technological transfers to better diversify the production of vaccines and other life-saving medical tools.

Louis Pasteur once said, "Science knows no country, because knowledge belongs to humanity, and is the torch which will illuminate the world." The wisdom of Pasteur's vision is more striking than ever. We must now all do our part to ensure that the fruits of our knowledge are shared swiftly and fairly, for the sake of all humanity.

New COVID-19 cases in Africa

Each wave is larger and faster.

(cases, thousands per day)



Source: JHU CSSE COVID-19 Tracking data and IMF staff calculations.

IMF

All about The People

A volatile mixture; Politics and Religion



Neri Briceno

came in sharp contrast. Today most states that practice any form of religious rules are basically autocratic, repressive and lack some of the basic freedoms that are afforded in other democratic nations. Modern day examples include Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran and yes, the Vatican City.

Religion at its core has the capacity to control. To control thought, behaviors, ideas and the way people act and that is reason why it has played a key role in most countries and the way they are governed. Long ago, leaders recognized that the influence of faith was a potent element to help with the governing of people.

Fundamentally I am opposed to any type of faith, religion or belief imposed on any population. I believe in the freedom of choice and will. But most importantly I believe in the freedom of religious and an individual rights to worship as they see fit... not including the fringe religions and those that are clearly against the morality of human nature. Additionally, while there are strong cases where I can see a synergy between the state and religion, I believe that the separation should be wide and broad.

It is with a certain level of concern that I look at this government's creation of a ministerial portfolio of Religious Affairs. While on the surface it looks mundane and well-intended, it has the capacity to control. Regardless of which religion or faith you ascribe to, at its core what people want is religious freedom. During the last administration, it was clear to see how the manipulation of faith and religion pretty much afforded the government a de-facto seat in the senate through the church's representative.

This must remain as a powerful example of too much mixing between the state and the cloth. Most modern-day theocracies start out pretty much

the same way. With a mandate to bridge the perceived or demonstrated divide between the state and its religious institutions. It is generally applauded

your list? Governments which by the nature of its creation is the most powerful force in any nation, has the capacity to identify these fissures, capitalize on

trations will take the same stance. Religion, faith and belief represent one sphere, while government, politics and the governing of people represent another sphere. It is unusual when both can mix without one exploiting the other. Time will tell and we will wait and see what the true mandate of this new portfolio is. While we will all agree that Belize needs more righteousness and morally in everyday life, the state cannot be the primary driving force because they will not do it for free. There will be cost implications and because the

goal of administrations is to remain in power, the cost of doing that might remain with the ability to control and influence faith, religion and the cloth who represent the people.

It's all about the people!

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This must remain as a powerful example of too much mixing between the state and the cloth.

by the population as a step in the right direction since as human we yearn that our own personal religious beliefs are ingrained in the way we are governed. However, what about the other person's belief, where do they count on

them and ultimately exploit them.

While today this administration might be applauding and advocating Belize's Christian belief and the supremacy of God, who is to say that subsequent adminis-



VACANCY: JOB OPPORTUNITY

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

BOAT CAPTAIN

Reports to: Marine Manager

Summary of Responsibilities: The primary duty of the Boat Captain is to safely navigate the vessel of which he has in command. The captain has absolute authority relating to the safe conduct of his voyage and he alone shall make determinations regarding the safety of his vessel, crew and passengers, including when put to the sea. This post is fun and challenging, come prepared for a new venture.

Job Responsibilities:

- Operate and navigate all Port of Belize Limited vessels under command in a safe and efficient manner.
- Ensure that the Pilots Launches are always in a state of readiness to perform its function. Be thoroughly familiar with the duties of a Captain/Engineer as contained in Belize Port Authority Mariner's Handbook.
- Provide proper accounting for all fuel and lubricants and for spare parts used in repairs and maintenance including a log Book for each vessel.
- Ensure the safe handling of hazardous material in compliance with current safety precautions and environmental protection laws and regulations in the procurement, stowage and disposal of such materials.
- Ensure that the Pilots & Stevedores embarking and disembarking from ship are done in a safe and efficient manner.
- Follow proper and comprehensive preventative maintenance program for the Pilot Launches as provided and assist to effect repairs to engines of the Pilot Launch.
- In time of emergency or danger, when in command, give proper and clear instructions.
- Inspect Vessels, check fuel levels, major shipboard systems, navigational lights and sound devices.
- Ensure all safety devices are onboard and in good working order.
- Complete Pre & Post voyage check list.
- Any other duties of a related nature assigned from time to time.

Job Qualifications/Requirement:

- Minimum High School Diploma.
- 5 years' boat handling experience preferred (minimum Class B).
- Possess a valid Boat Captain License Class C.
- Knowledge of maritime laws and regulations

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

- Firm Knowledge of marine craft communication and problem-solving skills.
- Must have the ability to adapt to changing conditions and respond to emergency situations.
- Able to easily multi-task and work independently.
- Team Oriented, Punctual, and Ethical

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 Monday, January 31st, 2022.

Brass Tacks

Early Events Don't Look Promising

By: Sedi Elrington

Most Belizeans are hoping and praying that 2022 will be better for them than 2021. Last year was stressful and rough. It was filled with uncertainties, worries and insecurities.

The new Briceno administration did not make a difference. It had assumed office in the midst of the raging Covid-19 pandemic and a homicide epidemic. Both continued to rage under the new Prime Minister's watch. The Treasury was bare. Government was deeply indebted. It had unsustainable recurring wage and other bills. After acrimonious negotiations with the unions it was agreed that the wages of all public officers would be cut by ten percent. And, that face to face schooling would be suspended indefinitely. Those decisions were implemented and remain in place up to this day.

All in all 2021 was characterized by a high degree of apprehension throughout our nation.

The popular wish for Twenty-twenty-two was for good health, prosperity, security and happiness. But, unfolding events in the first weeks of this New Year don't look promising. Both nationally and internationally the news is mostly bad. The Covid-19 virus and its variants are continuing to wreak havoc upon lives and livelihoods worldwide. Frequent catastrophic weather events are making bad situations worse. So too are spiraling inflation contagion induced by soaring energy prices. Everyone is now hoping and praying for a worldwide return to pre-pandemic normalcy as quickly as possible.

Here at home the senseless assassination of our youth is continuing unabated. Covid-19 infections are rapidly spiking, causing consternation among jaded health care workers. Our productive sector, and in particular our fragile tourist industry,

is being severely impacted. Inordinate amounts of workers are reporting ill and unable to turn up for work. Both airlines and cruise ship companies are announcing cancellations to tourist destinations, including our country, until later in the year. This will be having devastating effects upon the cash flow of workers, companies and government alike.

These occurrences underscore the fragility of our country. We are small. We are poor. We are heavily indebted. Our talent pool is severely limited both in terms of quantum and quality. Our private sector is puny. And our population is in large measure, small, unsophisticated and sharply divided politically!

In short we are simply not in fit form to successfully confront the multiple crises now engulfing us.

The performance of the Briceno administration, after thirteen months in office, have not lived up to pre-election hype, as was to be expected. But of far greater significance and much more germane and unsettling, is the reality that the lot of most Belizeans, the direct descendants of the last of Britain's subjects in colonial Belize, may well have worsened rather than improved during the fifty seven years since our country attained full internal self-government in 1964, and our native leaders, lead by then Premier the Honourable George Cadle Price, assumed responsibility for the development of our country and citizens.

Today, too many Belizeans eke out their existence in urban slums and ghettos. Too many of our youth are members of criminal gangs. Too many parents and children are poorer, less educated and skilled, more indisciplined, violent and murderous, and more unethical, unprincipled, and ill mannered, than were their colonial parents.

When we compare the performance of our national leaders with that of the performance of Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and his People's Action Party commencing in the nineteen sixties, we see that whereas within two score years Singapore was catapulted from the backwaters of the Third World into the ranks of the First World, our beloved Belize has languished in those stagnant backwaters up

We delude ourselves if we believe that the maintenance of the status quo, and business as usual, will see us safely and unscathed through these perilous challenges now confronting us.

to the present day with seemingly no sign of escape. Consequently, the multiple crises which beset our country are sorely testing our viability as a sovereign independent nation!

We delude ourselves if we believe that the maintenance of the status quo, and business as usual, will see us safely and unscathed through these perilous challenges now confronting us.

Our country should have three pre-conditions to see us safely through present challenges and those lurking beyond our horizon: first and foremost, we need leaders of quality! Surely now is the time for our icons, both in the public domain as well as in the private sector, to be making their contribution in the direction and management of the affairs of our nation. Without the input of wise, selfless, honest, bold competent, indefatigable, dedicated and determined patriots, females and males, our country runs the very real risk of being overwhelmed by these crises and challenges, and of sliding backwards precipitously.

Second, our country urgently needs a reformed public service, one that is proficient, efficient, transparent, corruption free, professional, skilled, service oriented, citizen friendly, principled,

patriotic, and motivated by a desire to serve our country to the best of its ability. To effect this transformation the members of our public service must first and foremost be paid adequate wages, and be afforded humane conditions of service. They must all be guaranteed security of tenure so long as their service is beyond reproach. They must also be given the opportunity to earn

a life time pension sufficient to keep them in good stead upon retiring from the service. And they must also be shielded by legislation from political interference in the discharge of their duties and from the issuance to them of improper and unlawful instructions and or requests by politicians.

Recruitment to the public service should be done through a system of open competitive examination of candidates. All prospective employees of the public service should receive a probationary appointment of one year. No person should be recruited into the public service by reason of nepotism or political patronage. And legislation should be enacted providing for the establishment of a fair and efficient disciplinary process for the disciplining of public officers with a mandate for resolving all disciplinary matters within a maximum of one year!

Of course, as with every nation on earth from time immemorial, the nation's citizens must be its ultimate defenders and protectors. Our history has shown that whenever our country has been confronted with grave perils and dangers, it is the ordinary, fiercely patriotic Belizean men and women who rise to the occasion and save

the day. This time will be no different. It is therefore, imperative that every effort be made urgently to fully inform and educate our people about the true nature and extent of the crises and challenges currently facing our nation. This is no time for propaganda! Neither is this time for sugar coating the facts. The ordinary Belizean needs to know the pure unvarnished truth about our present plight.

While governments of developed countries have ready access to large sums of money that can be used to stimulate economic activities, create employment and pay to rebuild structures, communities and economies destroyed by catastrophes, the Belizean government is cash strapped and can do no such thing.

Indeed, for far too long, our country has been reliant upon the generosity and solidarity of allies and international organizations and agencies. However, the dangers of being so reliant upon others have been manifested in events such as the current hoarding of Covid-19 vaccines by wealthy western nations to the detriment of millions of people in the developing world; the absolutely abominable and inhumane treatment being meted out to migrants worldwide by rich and powerful nations; and the parsimony of those same nations in refusing to provide in a timely manner, badly needed funds and knowledge to poor nations to enable them to adapt to and mitigate the catastrophic effects of climate change. Dependence upon the begging bowl and philanthropy for a nation's necessities is a deeming and unenviable position for any nation to find itself in. We must therefore strive mightily to become less dependent and more self-reliant.

Our most prudent course of action at this time is to focus upon our collective

assets. We must identify them, collect and harvest them, and dispense them judiciously. Mercifully our country is poor but not destitute. We are not totally devoid of resources. Neither are we completely bereft of talent. We are also a resilient people accustomed to persevering in times of great adversity, like the children of Sisyphus, notwithstanding the vagaries of nature. We know how to close ranks and join forces in times of crises.

The challenges we now confront are simultaneously placing the world community in peril, danger and jeopardy as well. We are therefore not without company in this moment of adversity. Because the safety and security of the world community is inextricably bound up with our own safety and security, and because nowhere in the world will be safe and secure from the Covid-19 virus and from the effects of climate change until everywhere is safe and secure, we can expect that for the foreseeable future our country will be receiving external assistance both in cash and in kind to help us to combat current crises and challenges. But that does not relieve our leadership from the obligation to set in motion steps necessary to truly transition our nation from a Third World country to a First World one. Without such a transformative agenda our country will be stalked perpetually by underdevelopment, poverty, crime, violence and insecurity.

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Are electric toothbrushes better than manual toothbrushes?

Dentists and their patients have long asked the question: are electric toothbrushes better than manual toothbrushes? While the answer will come down to personal taste, budget and people's access to the latest dental technology, science has come up with a clear answer to the quandary.

But, as with many answers, there are some exceptions and circumstances to consider when deciding if an electric toothbrush would be better than a manual toothbrush. Your age, the health of your teeth, and whether you're undergoing any dental treatment are all contributing factors that would help a dentist decide if an electric toothbrush would be best for you.

Discover the pros and cons of manual versus electric toothbrushes, and who should be using which one. You can also find great savings on some excellent electric toothbrush brands, including Oral B electric toothbrush deals and Philips electric toothbrush deals so you can find the best electric toothbrush to suit your needs.

WHAT ARE THE BEST OPTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS?

The most appropriate toothbrush option for you will change throughout your life, and can depend on whether you are going through dental treatment at any given time. So, the first step is breaking down toothbrush options depending on your age group.

Research published in the International Journal of Pediatric Dentistry found that electric toothbrushes were the best option for children who have their teeth brushed by a parent or were independent enough to brush their teeth effectively on their own. Dentists surveyed by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry advise that your child should be treated by a dentist from the age of one year. Your child's dentist will recommend when you need to start using an electric toothbrush to clean their teeth.

Researchers have looked into whether teenagers look after their teeth more effectively when given a manual or electric toothbrush. The data shared in the BMC Oral Health journal showed that over two weeks, teens who were given an electric toothbrush brushed their teeth for longer and had less plaque at the end of the experiment. Dentist Dr. Amo Sohal, MDDr. BSc. Pg (dip) confirmed this, and told Live Science that "electric, sonic, or powered toothbrushes are clinically proven to be more effective than a manual brush in keeping gums and teeth healthy."

Dr. Hannah Kinsella recommended using a sonic toothbrush: "I recommend that patients use a sonic toothbrush because the brush does all the work for you, so all you need to do is to move it around your mouth and not apply too much pressure as this can damage gums." Sonic toothbrushes differ from other brushes because they move much faster than their oscillating counterparts meaning you simply need to place the brush head on the three surfaces of each tooth to get a good clean.

As with any rule, there are some exceptions. After having dental surgery, you may need to consider using a specialist toothbrush for a few weeks. Research shared in the Scientific World Journal found that using a manual soft toothbrush with extra-fine bristles was the most comfortable option during recovery from dental surgery. They also found that by using a comfortable toothbrush, people could keep up with their oral hygiene routine better.

There are also specific recommendations for those having orthodontic treatment. For example, researchers at the Angle Orthodontist journal found that oscillating-rotating toothbrushes were more effective at removing plaque and reducing decay than sonic toothbrushes for patients with fixed braces.

We've broken down the main points of comparison between manual and electric toothbrushes so you can figure out the best option for your needs.

CONS: MANUAL TOOTHBRUSHES

Price point: Manual toothbrushes range between \$0.80 and \$15 depending on the make and model according to current listings on Walmart.

Effectiveness: Manual toothbrushes rely on the user's technique to be efficient. Dr. David Rice told Live Science that the type of manual brush you



choose is crucial: "if you're going to use a manual brush, it's very important to make sure you're using a soft-bristled brush. Pressing too hard can damage your gums and/root surfaces of your teeth if they are exposed for any reason."

Functions: Manual toothbrushes get the job done. They're helpful to use when you're on a tight budget, to have in your car or at work as a backup, or if you're traveling. Models tend not to vary too much from one brand to another.

Accessibility: Handles on manual toothbrushes tend to be narrower than for some electric toothbrushes. The Journal for the American Geriatrics Society found that accessibility may be an issue for those who struggle with arthritis in their hands or other neurological or musculoskeletal conditions that affect dexterity.

Sustainability: Manual toothbrushes are more sustainable than electric toothbrushes. Manual brushes with detachable heads and bamboo toothbrushes were both found to be the most sustainable options, according to research published in the British Dental Journal in 2020.

THE PROS AND CONS: ELECTRIC TOOTHBRUSHES

Price point: Between \$5 and \$200 depending on the make and model according to current listings on Walmart.


Effectiveness: The consensus between all the dentists we spoke to is that electric toothbrushes are more effective than manual brushes at removing plaque and keeping your teeth and gums as healthy as possible.

Functions: Electric toothbrushes have a range of functions that vary depending on the make and model. Some include timers to ensure you have brushed your teeth for long enough, and others also have sensors to warn you when you're applying too much pressure while brushing.

Accessibility: According to the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, researchers have found electric toothbrushes help to improve oral hygiene in people with disabilities because of how effective they are at reducing plaque. The length of time needed to brush teeth effectively is less than with a manual toothbrush, relieving carers of an otherwise lengthy and uncomfortable task for their patient or loved one.

Sustainability: Electric toothbrushes are not the most sustainable option for oral care. They do, however, tend to require less water usage when brushing teeth than manual brushes, according to

THE PROS AND



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George Price Day

Please be advised that all Atlantic Bank branches and drive thrus will be closed for business on Saturday, January 15, 2022 in celebration of George Price Day.

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Cabinet reshuffle assigns MOHW to Kevin Bernard

By William Ysaguirre

The promotion of Orange Walk representative Hon. Kevin Bernard to the hot seat as Minister of Health and Wellness was major news, when Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño announced his first Cabinet reshuffle on Monday, January 10.

Bernard's reappoint also involved the shift of his embattled predecessor, Cayo North representative Hon. Michel Chebat, to the Ministry of Public Utilities and Logistics. Chebat's new portfolio was originally held by Stann Creek West Representative Hon. Rodwell Ferguson, who retained his responsibility for Transportation, and inherited Bernard's portfolios for Youth and Sports.

Bernard's other responsibility, the E-governance and Digitalization Unit, which morphed

out of the Central Information Technology Office (C.I.T.O.) has now been transferred to Minister of Education, Culture, Science and Technology Hon. Francis Fonseca.

Bernard has no medical background but must now take on the task of assembling a team of the right medical personnel to fill several key top posts within the MOHW, to help him as he enters the cauldron of the raging COVID-19 pandemic which has reached a new record with the highest ever number of 6,645 active cases. His first hurdle is to find a new Chief Executive Officer, as Chebat lost two CEO's in short order.

He also has no Director of Health Services, as DHS Dr Marvin Manzanero was immediately sidelined when the PUP took office on November 12, 2020.

The DHS post was made redundant



New Health Minister Hon. Kevin Bernard

in subsequent months, with the responsibilities divided via a raft of legislative amendments that created two new posts, which still remain vacant.

Bernard will be putting out fires

all around, as the Ministry also has no national epidemiologist, as epidemiologist Dr Russell Manzanero has been at the Central Health Region since the Elections. He also needs to identify qualified people to fill the posts of Director of Laboratory Services, Director of the Drug Inspectorate Unit, and to head the IT department and the Pharmacy Department. He also needs to appoint regional managers for the Northern, Central and Southern Health regions, a hospital administrator for the Western Regional hospital in Belmopan, and a deputy manager for the Western health region.

Minister Bernard had high hopes for what he can accomplish when he spoke to the media

later that day, saying he would bring renewed energy to his new office, with the goal to surround himself with the right technical people and to listen to their advice.

Nevertheless, Opposition Leader Hon. Patrick Faber was unimpressed and criticized both Chebat and Bernard at his press conference at the UDP secretariat in Belize City on Tuesday morning, January 11.

Faber compared the COVID-19 death toll under Manzanero's and Chebat's watch. Under Manzanero, Faber reminded, there were 75 deaths, compared to 532 more deaths since the PUP took office, bringing the death toll to 607. Faber said Chebat's performance did not even merit him staying on as

any part of the PUP administration.

Bernard's 'promotion' to the Health ministry likewise filled Faber with unease. "We don't believe that he's up to the task, given the current situation that exists," Faber declared. Chebat has left the ministry's entire organizational structure in a shambles, and Faber said plainly he did not feel that Bernard was fit for the job of setting things right.

With the country facing its worst crisis of the pandemic and unprecedented numbers of new infections, Faber says it were better if the Prime Minister were to appoint a medical professional to become a Senator, so that this person could take on the Ministerial post with the requisite medical expertise.

The UDP sees Bernard as being merely the Prime Minister's yes-man, whose achievements in his previous portfolio were mediocre at best, and that he is not up to the task of leading the very vital Health ministry. Faber typified the PUP's administration's investment so far to fight the pandemic as "stingy". Faber pooh-poohed the Prime Minister's claims in his New Year's address that the government had spared no expense to save Belizean lives as untrue, saying this was perhaps true only for a few favored PUP's.

TENDER

Transmission Vegetation Management

BEL invites tenders for Transmission Vegetation Management in the following areas:

North Zone	West Zone	South Zone
Included in this work is the clearing of right of way, pole heels, cribs, anchors, guy wires, access roads and cutting of danger trees as per line clearing standards.		
Proposals should include a firm and fixed unit price for line clearing on the specified Transmission Lines (TML).		
The bidding documents, which outline all the duties and responsibilities of the contract, are available on BEL's website at www.bel.com.bz/Tenders.aspx		

All inquiries must be submitted via email to bidboxrequest@bel.com.bz no later than 3:00 p.m. on Monday, January 17, 2022.

An email submission must be received at bidsubmittal@bel.com.bz no later than 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 19, 2022.

Proposals will be accepted by email only and should include the subject **BID #2021-331 – Transmission Vegetation Management.**

For more information or queries, send email to bidboxrequest@bel.com.bz

Cost incurred for preparation of the tender document is the sole responsibility of the bidder. The lowest or any tender will not necessarily be accepted.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The University of Belize (UB) is inviting offers from the public for the following vehicles:

ZX AUTO- GRAND TIGER	PICK UP TRUCK	2011
NISSAN URVAN	VAN	2012
FORD	PICK UP TRUCK	2001
TOYOTA COASTER	BUS	2007
TOYOTA RAV 4	SUV	2011
MITSUBISHI MONTERO	SUV	2007
TOYOTA HILUX	PICK UP TRUCK	2008

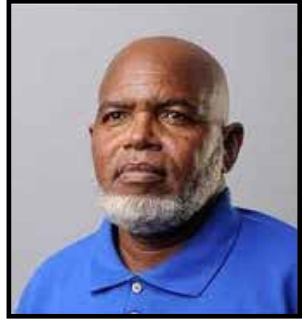
Interested persons can view the vehicles at the University's Belmopan Campus located at Hummingbird Avenue in the City of Belmopan, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Monday - Friday. UB reserves the right to reject any offer and to suspend this call for offers at any time, and will not be responsible for any costs associated with the preparation of that candidate/s offer. Offers are to be made in writing and addressed to:

The President
University of Belize
Administration Building
Hummingbird Avenue
City of Belize, Belize
ATTN: Director of Finance

Closing Date is Friday, January 21, 2022 at 4:00 p.m.
Kindly note the vehicles are being sold "As Is" and accepted offers are final.

GRASSROOTS

Great Expectations



By Hon. Gilroy Usher

"The greatest wealth is health"- Virgil

A creative, productive, and safe country with an increasing population requires persons, who are healthy to fulfill a wide range of needs of

the society.

Ensuring persons have access to proper and affordable healthcare is therefore of paramount importance for national development.

The new Minister of Health and Wellness is Hon. Kevin Bernard. He is tasked with moving the health service in the country forward especially at public health facilities, which serve the vast majority of the population, who cannot afford private healthcare.

One of the first native medical doctors in the country was Dr. Karl Heusner (Sept. 6, 1872- Dec. 1, 1960). Dr. Heusner was born in British Honduras now Belize to parents, who were German immigrants. After studying abroad, he returned to the country at the age of 20 in 1892 as medical doctor and started his own practice at the family home cor. Regent and Price Streets.

In serving all class of people Dr. Heusner also made home visits on bicycle, horse and buggy, and in his black model T Ford car. As a result of his professionalism Dr. Heusner, became known throughout the Caribbean and Latin America for his expertise in tropical diseases.

Thirty years after the Jewel became a British colony in 1862, Dr. Heusner was a trailblazer in showing that even though this was a small country with a tiny population at the time, and the people could achieve great things by working together for the common good.

The people looked forward to better healthcare from Dr. Heusner and others in the health sector at the time, and they were satisfied with the services provided, because they knew Dr. Heusner and others in the health service ensured that they provided the best possible healthcare with the available resources.

In 1995 the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (K.H.M.H.) named in memory of Dr. Heusner replaced the Old Belize City Hospital on Eve Street. It immediately became flagship for the provision of health services at public facilities across the country. The people rely on public health services in their time of medical care and in the vast majority of cases they are successful treated.

People are now relying on the Ministry of Health and Wellness to lead the way in getting the country out of its most challenging health situation that has been caused by the pandemic for the last two years.

Thousands of Covid victims have been saved since 2020; nevertheless, over 605 Belizean men, women, and children of all ages have lost their lives to the virus especially those who had underlining health issues.

The corruption, neglect, and mismanagement

that have hindered progress in the delivery of public healthcare have been well known for decades. Those problems however became fifty times worst under the thirteen-year reign of the Barrow/Faber administration. During that time, the country experienced its most corrupt administration in its entire history.

Despite his shortcomings, thanks must be given to the previous Minister of Health and Wellness for the past year for whatever ways he was able to improve the delivery of health services in the country.

The people are relying on the new Minister of Health and Wellness and his team to chart the way forward in combating the pandemic to enable students to return to classes,

The people look forward to concrete steps being taken to deal with corruption in the delivery of public healthcare. The millions of dollars lost in those corrupt deals were funds that could have been used to address many of the other health needs in the country.

people to travel more freely, and businesses to resume normal operations as much as possible. The resumption of those and other activities will get the economy roaring again. Those are all necessary developments for nation building. As the economy improves, production increases, people have more jobs, and G.O.B. earns additional revenue to address the needs of the people.

From the Minister at the top to entry level employees across the country cooperation, team work, and a feeling of inclusiveness are needed to improve the delivery of health services to the people. Meeting that objective requires qualified persons with the necessary experience in the right positions, persons who understand that they have be employed to offer the best possible service to the public, and persons who respect the chain of command in any business. Success with public healthcare also requires managers and supervisors, who make every effort to address the legitimate concerns of those in their departments.

Such positive actions improve moral which is essential for maximum output in any organization. Improved moral on the job replaces frowns with smiles and a "don't care" attitude with how can one help to make the workplace more productive.

In addition to those things delivery of adequate health services requires access to quality medication and the most affordable technology.

This writer was pleased when on a recent visit to the dentist, he was shown inside the mouth in real time with sharp images on a monitor.

Corruption with equipment, medications, and other items has been a major impediment with the delivery of improved healthcare especially at several the government facilities.

In the past, unscrupulous businesspersons were allowed to sell inferior medications and other supplies to the government. Many times the administration was taken to the cleaners with bloated prices for medical supplies, and worst many times the government paid

big bucks, thousands of dollars for medical supplies that were never delivered, and those funds were never recovered.

The open tender process for contracts above a reasonable amount as stated in black and white is one of the best ways to reduce corruption in any organization. Unfortunately in the delivery of public healthcare, all types of schemes were devised in previous years to avoid uses of the open tender process as much as possible.

The people look forward to concrete steps being taken to deal with corruption in the delivery of public healthcare. The millions of dollars lost in those corrupt deals were funds that could have been used to address many of the other health needs in the country.

Lack of human resources is another major problem with the delivery of the best possible healthcare in public facilities. Wages are often low in comparison to similar work in a number of other public sector organizations and far below similar work in the private sector. Furthermore in public healthcare many persons are kept as open vote workers for years, which deny them the opportunity to qualify for a pension and gratuity. Public health employees also have limited opportunities for training, and political interference often undermines the ability of fully qualified persons to receive deserved promotions or being employed in the delivery of public health care.

The Ministry of Health has to dialogue with the unions that represent the employees in the delivery of public healthcare and offer them the best possible packages to ensure the necessary persons are in place for the provision of proper public health services throughout the country.

The University of Belize has been offering a nursing program since its inception. Nevertheless, the country has been experiencing a severe shortage of nurses in both the private and public sectors due to many disincentives. At the same time, notwithstanding high fees, nurses and other healthcare providers from the Philippines and other distant counties find it more affordable to work in healthcare in this country than full Belizeans in their country. That should never be acceptable.

The people have tremendous confidence and hope in the new Minister of Health and Well. From councilor in Orange Walk Town he went on the serve as Mayor of the municipality for three consecutive terms with a very unfriendly and unhelpful red administration in Belmopan.

Despite the many challenges he faced at the time, Mayor Bernard was able to deliver on most of his promises to the people.

The plate served to the new Minister of Health and Wellness includes failures and challenges with the delivery of proper and affordable public healthcare despite the best efforts of the doctors, nurses, and other employees in the sector.

The people truly believe the new Minister of Health and Wellness will manage the Ministry and the public health facilities in the land in the best interest of all Belizeans and the county.

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.



Belize, Mexico, and Special & Differential Treatment

For more than a decade, there has been a near-complete acceptance among Belizean stakeholders that there are merits in improving Belize's trade and investment relationship with our northern neighbor, Mexico. As the Directorate General for Foreign Trade (DGFT)'s website explains, "Consultations since 2010 have shown that there is general support for expanding trade and investment relations with Mexico in a manner that will allow for asymmetries in favour of Belize."

The DGFT, of course, would go on to explain that

Belizean authorities, having received the requisite approval, have "engaged its counterpart Ministry in Mexico... to being negotiation towards a Partial Scope Agreement."

Optimistically, the trade unit would go on to elucidate that the PSA would allow "domestic producers to trade an agreed set of goods on a less restrictive basis with Mexico."

A Quick Detour to the West

Belize is no stranger to PSAs, as it forged one such agreement with Guatemala in 2006. The Belize-Guatemala PSA, which came into force in 2010, allows for trade on a select number of goods—150

product lines, to be more precise. Under the PSA, seventy-two goods from Belize receive preferential treatment when sold to Guatemala, and, in turn, Belize has increased access to 78 goods originating from Guatemala.

Contained within the text of the agreement, the Belize-Guatemala PSA speaks to "special and differential treatment," wherein the contracting parties can consider the differences in the size of both economies, with the smaller economy being the recipient of "asymmetrical treatment."

To put the size differences into their

proper context, in 2010—when the PSA entered into force—the Guatemalan economy recorded a GDP of more than USD \$40 billion. At that time, Belize's economy was measured at a USD \$1.5 billion, a figure barely four percent of the Guatemalan's output. In 2020, Guatemala's GDP was USD \$77.6 billion, with Belize's coming in at USD \$1.8 billion (just about 2.3% of our western neighbor's size).

In terms of GDP-based rankings, the World Bank's 2020 estimate placed the Guatemalan economy as the 68th largest economy in the world. On the same World Bank list, Belize was placed at 180th out of 206 countries. Among other things, the 112-point gap between Belize's and Guatemala's rankings (based on economic size) supports the utilization of special and differential treatment principles between our countries.

Northwards

Returning, therefore, to the Belize-Mexico chapter in Belize's trade books, it cannot be overlooked that our northern neighbor is—on that same World Bank list—recognized as the 15th largest economy in the world, with a GDP of US 1.1 billion in 2020. Belize's GDP for that year would constitute just about 0.2%, a figure notably below where we stood with the Guatemalans.

Logically, even at a cursory glance, we could see, then, why the DGFT's position for the last decade or more has been in favor of a PSA as opposed to a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA). More importantly, the differences in our economies' sizes would demand the presence of asymmetrical treatment, with Mexico giving far more concessions and assistance to "young"

Belize than we would be expected to give in return.

Furthermore, beyond the size differences in terms of GDP and the standard tracking of trade flows between partners, trade professionals over the years have developed varying methods to analyze the likely levels of success that trade agreements are likely to have. These indicators include the likes of the Trade Complementarity Index (TCI), World Bank's SMART Simulation Tool that employs a partial equilibrium analysis methodology, or even more data-heavy methods such as general equilibrium analyses.

The TCI, for instance, is calculated by the World Bank (via its World Integrated Trade Solution portal, WITS). Simply put, the TCI runs from zero to a score of 100. The closer trading partners' scores are to 100, the more likely it is that the FTA would likely be successful. The reverse, of course, is true: The closer they are to zero, the least likely it would prove beneficial.

Using the WITS' database, the Belize-to-Mexico TCI scores about 17—a notable 83 points away from 100. Interestingly, the Belize-to-Guatemala TCI is slightly higher at 19—approximately 81 points away from the maximum on the index.

Enter into the equation the partial equilibrium (PE) analysis enshrined in the World Bank's SMART simulation software, and the results unsurprisingly corroborate what one could already have suspected. The PE analysis illustrates that Belize's imports from Mexico are likely to expand much faster than Belize's exports to our northern partner. This type of scenario would suggest an expanding

trade deficit for Belize.

Of course, we must hasten to say that there is a reason technique is called "partial." Among other things, it leaves out salient feedback loops and does not consider the impact of the services trade and the role of investments. We, however, would leave the likes of the General equilibrium analysis to the relevant authorities.

Nevertheless, caveats aside, most indicators seem to "advise" that a reasonably cautious approach should be adopted when discussing the type of trade arrangement to pursue with Mexico. In our view, therefore, as it pertains to protecting Belize's local industry, the trade technocrats at the DGFT appear to have had it right for the last decade. That is to say, the Partial Scope Agreement (PSA) is ideal at this time.

Of course, if there will be any deviation away from that longstanding position, then the relevant authorities would need to empirically justify such a significant shift in policy.

Fundamentally, the trade rules that afford special and differential treatment to smaller economies like Belize exist for a reason. We would do well to continue in our policy of taking full advantage of these World Trade Organization (WTO)-sanctioned provisions.

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NOTICE

GOVERNMENT OF BELIZE TREASURY BILLS ISSUE NUMBER 2/2022

Tenders are invited for an issue of Government of Belize Treasury Bills. The amount of the issue will be \$64,391,800.00.

The Bills will be issued in electronic form only evidenced by an electronic book entry in the Central Securities Depository of the Central Bank of Belize in multiples of \$200 and will be repayable at par 91 days after issue. They will be issued on Tuesday, 25 January 2022 and will be redeemed on Tuesday, 26 April 2022.

Each tender must be for \$200 or a multiple of \$200 and must specify to five decimal places the amount, which is offered for each one hundred dollars face value of the Bills sought.

Members of the public who wish to participate in the auction must submit their bid to the Central Bank of Belize electronically or at the designated drop off box no later than 12:00 noon on Friday, 21 January 2022.

The Auction in the Central Securities Depository System (CSD) will be opened from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm on Tuesday, 25 January 2022.

Successful bidders should arrange to settle via the Automated Payment & Securities Settlement System of Belize (APSSS).

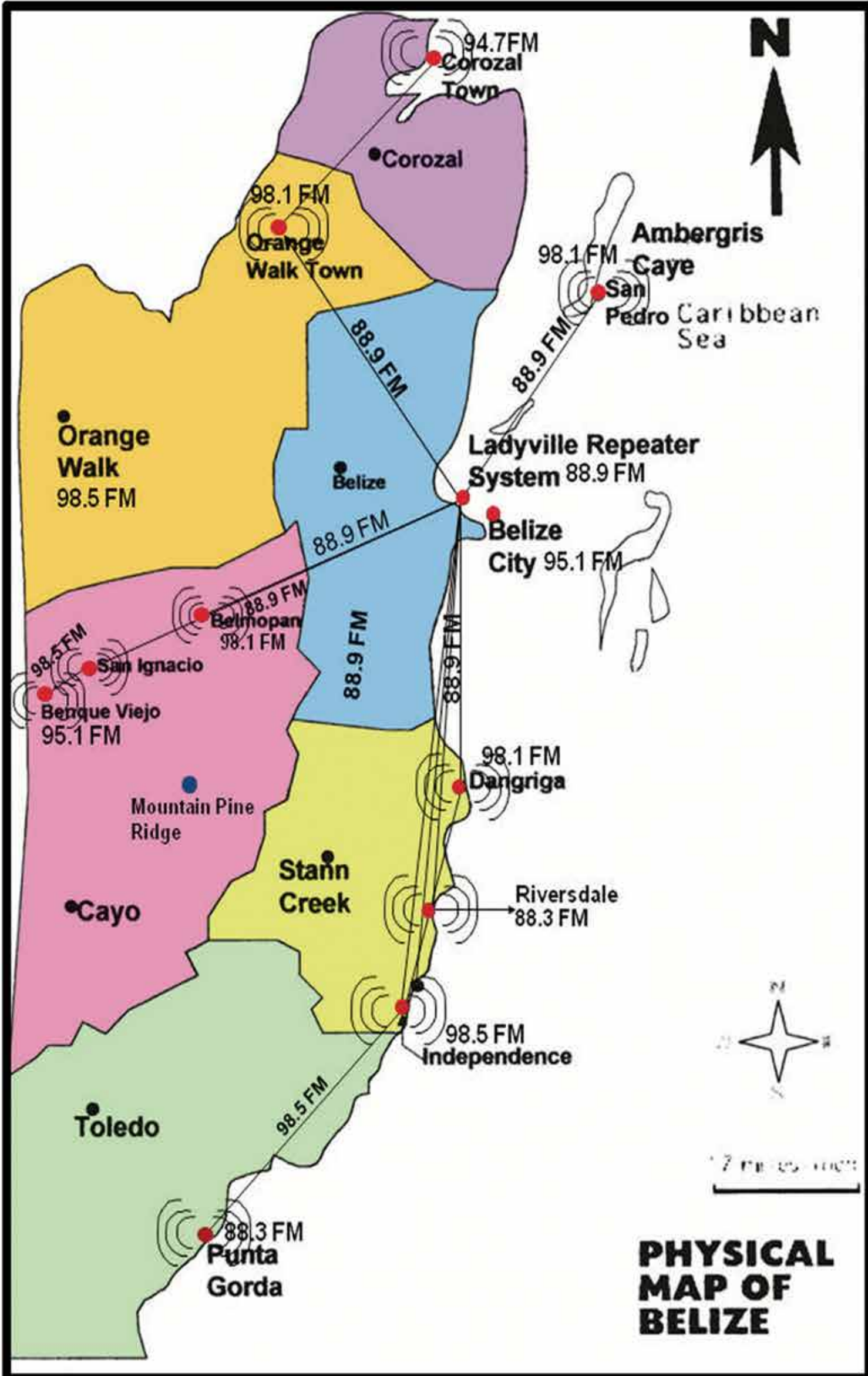
Bank: Central Bank of Belize
Account: GLICORP0402627

The Government of Belize reserves the right to accept or reject any and/or all tenders in whole or in part.

CENTRAL BANK OF BELIZE

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City Council to increase property tax by 1%

By Javan Flowers

Earlier this week mayor of Belize City Bernard Wagner gave a media interview in which he detailed why the one percent increase for property taxes will be enacted.

Prior to the increase in property taxes, the City council has been giving discounts to those who pay within the months of January to March.

Bernard explained that taxes were to be increased from the time they took office back in 2018 but is only coming into effect now.

“If we go by the law, we should have done an increase about five years ago,” he told News 5. “There is a quinquennial process which should have been executed in 2017. When we came into office in 2018, we didn’t pursue it, but given the circumstances



Belize City Mayor Bernard Wagner says the increase is necessary to help CITCO provide services.

and especially after 2020 and 2021, we couldn’t see how we could ever look to increase property taxes. But 2022 is only one percent and if you are paying one hundred dollars in property taxes – say

for last year – so one percent increase in that will give you one dollar that you are paying extra now. But we are giving fifteen percent discount, so it really nullifies, it cancels out everything.”

For context, the law Mayor Wagner is referring to comes from The Towns Property Evaluation Act which reads, “(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of sections 19 and 20 of

this Act, the property tax in Belize City shall be levied in accordance with the provisions of this section.

“(2) The rate of property tax to be levied in Belize

City in respect of any property, whether occupied or unoccupied, shall be assessed on the market value thereof and such tax shall be applied towards the costs of services provided by the Belize City Council and the maintenance of its infrastructure.”

Accompanying this clarification is a revelation that the City Council is owed twenty-one million dollars. He continued by emphasizing that it is impossible to balance the demands of the city and not be able to collect the money that is owed to you.

Keep Calm and Read



The Reporter

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WESLEY COLLEGE VACANCY



The Board of Management of Wesley College invites applications for the post of a Full-time COMPUTER LAB TECHNICIAN

JOB TITLE: Computer Lab Technician

REPORTS TO: Principal

BASIC FUNCTION: Supervises the computer laboratories and provide assistance to the Teaching and Support staff and students, as required.

CLASSIFICATION: Managerial and Technical Personnel

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES:

1. Communicates and enforces computer laboratory policies to all laboratory users.
2. Maintains security of the software and equipment in the labs.
3. Maintains laboratory computer software and hardware according to an approved maintenance schedule.
4. Installs software and hardware as directed in conformance with IMM #1-10.
5. Assists Teachers in developing and installing teaching aids.
6. Assists students in the use of the computers, peripherals, and installed software.
7. Orders supplies necessary for the operation of the laboratory and classroom facilities.
8. Obtain fixtures to software and hardware problems through contact with outside vendor support and/or Wesley College technical support personnel.
9. Communicates laboratory problems to the Principal, Academic Vice Principal, I.T. HOD and other affected personnel.
10. Maintains License in the use of all software and hardware products used in the laboratory.
11. Performs other duties as assigned.

MINIMUM QUALIFICATION:

Associates Degree or higher in Information Technology or closely related field required. Degree must be from an accredited institution. Some experience in working with computers preferred.

Application package of;

- Cover letter
- Resume
- Original transcripts
- Valid police record
- Certified copy of a Valid social security card
- Certified copy of Birth certificate/Passport information page
- Medical certificate
- Certified copy of Covid-19 vaccine card
- Work permit (where applicable)

Along with two references, must be sent to Secretary of the Board, Wesley College, 34 Yarborough Road, Belize City, Belize no later than 17th January, 2022. Salary scale commensurate with Government pay scale based on qualifications.

The Righters Write

Basic human rights and freedoms under serious threat in Latin America

Contributed by the Human Rights Commission

“Latin America is experiencing such an alarming reversal of basic freedoms that we now have to defend democratic spaces that we once took for granted.” This is what Americas Acting Director at Human Rights Watch, Tamara Taraciuk Broner said when the Human Rights Watch released its “World Report 2022”.

The Human Rights Watch is an organization founded in 1978 and works to “scrupulously investigate abuses, expose facts widely, and pressure those with power to respect rights and secure justice. Human Rights Watch is an independent, international organization that works as part of a vibrant movement to uphold human dignity and advance the cause of human rights for all”.

This is the organization’s 32nd edition and in the document, it looks at human rights practices in some 100 countries. Its overview of Latin America cites human rights being under serious threat while humanitarian needs keep rising. Broner said that “Even democratically elected leaders attacked independent civil society, the free press, and judicial independence. Millions of people were forced to leave their homes and countries, and the economic and social impact of the pandemic has been devastating.”

Additionally, the report indicates that governments have used the COVID-19 pandemic as an excuse to violate rights. For example, in Guatemala, the government targeted

the media and imposed restrictions on information about the pandemic. In Brazil, the President disregarded scientific recommendations at the start of the pandemic, spread false information and promoted the use of drugs that were had not been scientifically proven to help against COVID-19.

The Human Rights Watch further highlights an alarming increase in migration and refugees. It reports that, “Despite border closures, millions of people have been forced to flee their homes. More than 6 million Venezuelans have fled their country; many face difficulty obtaining legal status in their host countries, as well as arbitrary deportations, xenophobia, and abuses by migration agents. Over 110,000 Nicaraguans have fled their country since 2018. Hundreds of thousands of people flee from Central America’s Northern Triangle every year. Many of those who flee in search of protection go through Mexico, where they suffer violence, discrimination, and abuses by criminal groups and Mexican authorities.”

Executive Director Kenneth Roth in his introductory essay states that “The conventional wisdom these days is that autocracy is ascendent, democracy on the decline”. The report calls out various states where governments have systemically engaged in abuses against its people, judiciary, media and human rights defenders. These include Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Bolivia,

Peru, Guatemala, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, and even El Salvador where “President Nayib Bukele and his allies in the legislature summarily replaced Supreme Court justices they disagreed with and passed laws to dismiss hundreds of lower-level judges and prosecutors. Supreme Court justices they named run for consecutive re-election, despite a constitutional prohibition. The government also proposed a “foreign agents” bill that, if approved, would severely restrict the work of independent journalists and civil society organizations”.

Roth challenged that “If democracies are to prevail in the global contest with autocracy, their leaders must do more than spotlight the autocrats’ inevitable shortcomings... That means doing a better job of meeting national and global challenges—of making sure that democracy delivers on its promised dividends. It means standing up for democratic institutions such as independent courts, free media, robust legislatures, and vibrant civil societies even when that brings unwelcome scrutiny or challenges to executive policies. And it demands elevating public discourse rather than stoking our worst sentiments, acting on democratic principles rather than merely voicing them, unifying us before looming threats rather than dividing us in the quest for another do-nothing term in office.”

Taraciuk Broner said journalists, human rights defenders and

judges played an “extraordinary role” in exposing abuses in Latin America and added that, “It is essential to continue supporting their critical efforts to protect the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, and democratic institutions at a time of major risks in the region.”

While the report reviews human rights abuses in the region, there were some progresses in human rights to report:

The Mexican Senate passed a reform to the General Law for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence to ensure shelters and Justice Centres for

Women are accessible for women with disabilities.

Chile’s Congress approved same-sex marriage.

Argentina recognized non-binary gender identities in official identity documents, making it the first country in Latin America to do so.

Brazil’s Supreme Court has blocked some of President Bolsonaro’s most damaging policies and upheld human rights.

The Guatemalan Ombudsperson’s Office has continued to voice concern about attempts to undermine fundamental rights in the country, even as

Congress attempted to remove him from office, and a possible criminal investigation for promoting LGBT and sexual and reproductive rights.

The full report can be found here: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022>.

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.

Customer Survey

SAGICOR LIFE INC

JANUARY 12TH TO FEBRUARY 4TH, 2022

Dear Valued Client,

As part of our continued efforts to ensure service excellence, Sagicor will be conducting a customer satisfaction survey during the period of **January 12, 2022** to **February 4, 2022**. Customers will be randomly selected and contacted via telephone or email by a representative from our external vendor, Professional Training and Occupational Services (PTOS).

Please note that this survey will not require you to provide any detailed financial information.

Your feedback is important to us and **Sagicor Life Inc** thanks you for participating.

For more information or if you have any questions, please feel free to email us at SFC_Research@Sagicor.com or call us at **1-800-744-7707**.



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PRESS RELEASE

The MoECST Clarifies Reports of COVID-19 Cases In Schools

The Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, as of January 13, 2022, has approved the transition to hybrid learning for 569 schools or about 94% of all schools nationwide. So far, 343 or 60.3% of all schools approved have physically reopened to accommodate students for hybrid learning. Our Ministry applauds the efforts of the members of our education community for the crucial role they are playing in ensuring a safe return for all our students.

The Ministry takes very seriously the safety of our teachers and students and, therefore, notes with great concern, reports in local media regarding suspected COVID-19 cases among teachers and students who are enrolled in hybrid learning, particularly in schools in the Belize District. We take this opportunity to clarify those reports.

Between January 10th and January 13th, the Ministry has, via our COVID-19 Reporting System, received confirmation of 108 cases of COVID-19 affecting teachers and 125 cases of COVID-19 affecting students, nationwide. Of the 108 cases affecting teachers, only 17 were recorded among teachers who were actively engaging in hybrid learning. When compared to cases among students, out of the 125 cases confirmed, 43 were confirmed

among students who were actively engaging in hybrid learning. Between the same time period, 1,626 teachers and 17,198 students were actively engaging in hybrid learning. Therefore, the cases recorded among teachers affected 1.04% of teachers actively engaging in hybrid learning and among students, the rate was even lower, with cases affecting only 0.25% of all students actively engaging in hybrid learning. The responses to these confirmed cases affecting teachers and students actively engaging in hybrid learning were prompt, and all sanitisation and cleaning protocols were applied as per our Guidelines on School Operation.

Our information is indicating that for the most part, these cases are appearing in persons who have recently attended social functions or are close contacts of individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19. Furthermore, considering the time when schools have been open and the usual incubation period for the COVID-19 virus, we can safely say that all cases being recorded are not a result of any school activity. While we welcome this news, we note that schools have reported that students have been coming to school when they are displaying flu-like symptoms.

On that basis, we appeal to parents,


legal guardians and caregivers to continue monitoring their children and to follow the guidelines for quarantine that can be accessed from our social media platforms, website and on our Education Data and Information Hub.

The challenges we in the education sector are confronted with as we transition to hybrid learning are not easy, and they will not be immediately resolved. The experts are clear: prolonged, nationwide school closures, limited resources for students, teachers and parents and lack of access to remote learning have wiped out decades of progress in education. We can only begin to rectify the situation when our children have returned safely return to school.

Our Ministry reaffirms our commitment to doing everything possible to ensure the safety of our education community as we continue the transition to hybrid learning. We have strengthened our surveillance efforts and will continue to support schools in this process. For the educational, emotional, and psychosocial wellbeing of our students, teachers, and our entire community, let us continue to be vigilant. Get vaccinated and get boosted. Wear your mask, wash your hands and watch your distance. Together we can and must make hybrid learning a success.



For more information or appointments contact us at 630-8703 or visit us on Cemetery Road next to Rogers Stadium.

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PUBLIC AUCTION

**BY ORDER OF THE MORTGAGEE, DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CORPORATION,
CERTIFIED AND LICENSED AUCTIONEER MIGUEL A. ELLIS WILL SELL THE
FOLLOWING PROPERTIES**

On Tuesday, 25th January, 2022

At: 9:30AM Zoom Meeting ID: 748 632 4247 Password: ZbhU07

Parcel No. 8261, Block No. 20, Belmopan Registration Section containing 464.612 Square Meters situate in the Maya Mopan Area, City of Belmopan, Cayo District held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of DELBERT AMOS RHABURN JR. — **A Two (2) bedroom timber dwelling containing a bath, a living, dining and kitchen combined attached to a front porch.**



Parcel No. 4012, Block No. 24, Society Hall Registration Section containing 795.226 Square Meters situate in the Roaring Creek Village, Cayo District held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of RAFAEL ANTONIO SALASAR. — **One two (2) bedroom concrete bungalow dwelling containing a living and dining area combined and kitchen area attached to a porch.**



All that piece or parcel of land containing **0.819 Acres, 25 Acres & 24.95 Acres respectively**, situate in the Frank's Eddy Agricultural Layout, Cayo District and held under 3 Deed of Conveyances together with all buildings, erections and developments standing thereon and being the freehold interests of DEON DALE PASCASCIO. — **Formerly known as PasguHal Eco-Lodge located in Frank's Eddy Village**



Parcel No. 269/1, Block 23, San Ignacio North Registration Section containing 557.41 Square Meters situate in San Ignacio Town, Cayo District held under a Certificate of Lease being the leasehold interest of KENT WILLIAM FLOWERS. — **One three (3) bedroom concrete bungalow dwelling containing 1 bath a combined living, dining and kitchen attached to a front and back porch.**



Parcel No. 1813, Block No. 4, Ann Gabourel Registration Section containing 555.56 Square Yards, held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of CHRISTINE SHERRY HAWKINS — **One Three (3) bedroom concrete bungalow dwelling containing 1 bath, 1 kitchen, 1 dining and a living area**



Parcel No. 116/1, Block No. 1 San Jose/San Pablo Registration Section containing 657.6 Square Meters situate in the San Pablo Village, Orange Walk District and held under a Certificate of Lease being the leasehold interest of ORLANDO MONTERO. — **One concrete bungalow residential home**



Parcel No. 603/1, Block 1, San Estevan Registration Section containing 766.4 Square Meters situate in San Estevan Village, Orange Walk District held under a Certificate of Lease being the leasehold interest of HORTENCIA YANELLA CHAN & ROSENDO MELVIN CHAN. — **One wooden bungalow styled dwelling measuring 110' x 75'. Set on a concrete slab containing 2 bedrooms a kitchen, dining, living area and 1 bath attached to a front porch.**



Parcel No. 96/1, Block 4, Chan Pine Ridge Registration Section, containing 907.475 S.M. situate in Chan Pine Ridge Village, Orange Walk District, held under Certificate of Lease being the leasehold interest of DIANELA T. REYNOSO (aka Aurora Dianela Tzul) surety for Esdra Reynoso — **One Concrete bungalow Three (3) Bedroom, 1 Bath, 1 Kitchen, dining and living area.**



All that piece or parcel of land being Lot No. 348 containing 956.733 Square Meters situate in the Maxboro Subdivision, Sandhill Village, Belize District as shown on Entry No. 5146 Register 21 held under a Minister's Flat Lease being the leasehold interest of SHERLEE FRAZER — **One -three (3) bedroom concrete bungalow dwelling with 1 living, 1 dining and 1 bath. Attached on both sides of the home by two porches.**



Parcel No. 1660, Block No. 45, Port/ Loyolaville Registration Section containing 325.953 Square Meters situate on Delaral Sanchez Street, Belize City, Belize held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of MARISOL LESLIE surety for GLENN FRANCIS LESLIE and MARISOL LESLIE — **An incomplete two (2) bedroom concrete bungalow dwelling containing 2 bath, 1 kitchen, 1 dining, laundry and a living area.**



All that piece or parcel of land being Lot No. 1 containing 696.48 Square Meters situate along the Northern Highway near Mile 12, Belize District, as shown on Register No. 24 Entry Plan No. 13447, held under a Deed of Conveyance being the freehold interest of CORNELIUS FRIESEN. — **One Unit with two stories - Ground Floor - I combined kitchen and dining area, 1 bedroom, 1 bath attached to an open office area (storage and assembly area), Level Upper floor - divided by a concrete partition with two sections that is incomplete.**



Parcel Nos. 8965 & 8964, Block No. 7, San Pedro Registration Section containing 1 Acre respectively situate 3.5 Miles North of San Pedro Town, Ambergris Caye, Belize District held under Land Certificates being the freehold interests of MADHU ODHERMAL BABANI — **Empty plots of land**



Parcel 304, Block 16, Vista Del Mar Registration Section containing 696.54 Square Meters held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of KEVIN ENRIQUEZ & ANDREA ENRIQUEZ surety for ANKA LTD.

Parcel 303, Block 16, Vista Del Mar Registration Section containing 696.54 Square Meters held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of KEVIN ENRIQUEZ & ANDREA ENRIQUEZ surety for ANKA LTD.

Parcel 302, Block 16, Vista Del Mar Registration Section containing 696.54 Square Meters held under a Land Certificate being the freehold interest of KEVIN ENRIQUEZ & ANDREA ENRIQUEZ surety for ANKA LTD.

A total of 2469.16 Square Yards containing 14 Apartments (10 One bedroom apartments & 4 two bedroom apartments) each with a living, dining, kitchen each attached to a private porch area and a shared laundromat area (22.5' x 40') which is situated at the front of the building.



**Miguel A. Ellis
P.O. Box 118, Belmopan,
Ph: 634-9058
E-Mail: miguel_ellis@hotmail.com
Please contact DFC for financing**

