

*Belize's leading newspaper*

# Cattouse Connection sweep Krem New Year's Classic

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

It was a beautiful New Year's morning on Saturday, January 1, 2022, and it was a great day for fans on the roadside to witness a return to prime time for cycling in Belize, after an almost two-year hiatus by the two most prestigious races in the nation – the Krem New Year's Classic and the Annual Holy Saturday Cross Country. Bright sunshine, a very brisk southeasterly breeze, and the outdoors beckoned sports fans to soak in some vitamin-D; but where the cyclists were concerned, the

strong wind in their faces was indeed a challenge, and many cannot be blamed for completing the grueling journey on the Philip Goldson Highway in the back of a pickup truck. Tired legs riding into a blistering southeaster is no joke, and much credit needs to be given to those that persevered to the finish line.

Because of the long dry spell in cycle races due to Covid-19 restrictions, the physical conditioning of many participants was understandably not

**Please turn to** ▶ Page 13



*Elite Male Winners*

## BSCFA and ASR/BSI sign interim agreement

*The agreement remains in place until July 2022, or the end of the sugar crop*

*by Marco Lopez*

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

The delivery and milling of sugarcane will finally start following the signing of an interim agreement between the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association (BSCFA) and Belize Sugar Industries (ASR/



**Please turn to** ▶ Page 14

## E&B Commission applies to strike out redistricting case

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

The Belize Peace Movement (BPM) and the Government of Belize have been locked in a legal battle since October of 2019 due to the BPM's efforts to have the Supreme Court issue an order for a redistricting exercise to be carried out in the country so that voters are equally distributed across the nation's constituencies. According to a press release issued by the Belize Peace Movement this morning, the chairman of the Elections and Boundaries Commission, Oscar Sabido, has filed an



*Paul Morgan and Oscar Sabido*

**Please turn to** ▶ Page 14

## PM Briceño is incoming CARICOM chairman



*PM John Briceño*

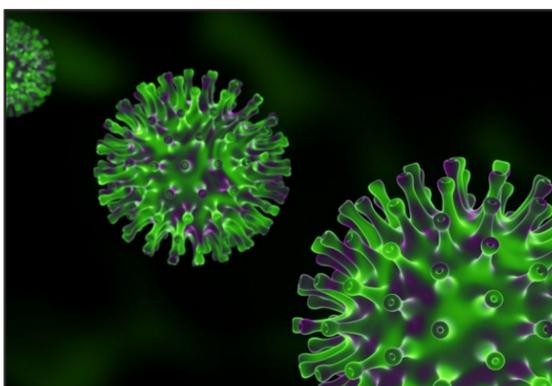
*(See story on page 4)*

## Omicron variant is in Belize — MOHW

*by Khaila Gentle*

BELMOPAN, Thurs. Dec. 30, 2021

A recent press release from the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW) warns the public that the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is most likely already in



**Please turn to** ▶ Page 14

## Belize City man killed on New Year's Eve



*Akeem Welch, deceased*

*by Khaila Gentle*

BELIZE CITY, Sun. Jan. 2, 2022

Just a few hours before the start of the New Year, a man was shot on Waight Street in Belize City.

**Please turn to** ▶ Page 15

# Education Ministry CEO speaks on plans for hybrid learning this January

Over 300 schools have already been approved for a mix of online and on-site learning and are set to reopen this month

by *Khaila Gentle*

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

In a recent interview, the CEO of the Ministry of Education, Diane Maheia, was asked about the government's plans to reopen schools on January 10. Those plans, which involve a hybrid blend of online and on-site learning, are already in motion, and according to the CEO, over 419 schools have applied to reopen.

"Of those 419," said Maheia, "we have 390 [schools] who are already

approved, and an additional 96 that had already been open for hybrid learning before school closed for the Christmas holiday." Among that 419 are schools from all levels, including early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary, and TVET schools.

Hybrid learning, as the CEO explained, will involve the rotation of students, especially in schools with larger populations, as it is difficult to accommodate all students at once while maintaining the necessary social distancing that COVID-19 protocols demand. While some

students would attend in-person classes on Mondays and Wednesdays, for example, others would attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Teachers, however, will be expected to be in the classroom full-time. And while there will be no mandate for teachers to get vaccinated, the CEO stated that unvaccinated teachers must continue to submit their negative COVID-19 tests. She also pointed out that vaccination remains the safest route for both educators and their families.

When asked if she believes that all schools will be approved and open for hybrid learning by January 10, Maheia had the following to say:

"We actually don't have a hard and fast date of January 10<sup>th</sup> for everyone. We do want everyone to come back, but there were some differences in the dates as the schools

requested...for different reasons. Some of them in their preparations needed a little bit more time for things that they were putting together. And so we've given them that leeway—that's fine. But we do anticipate that by the end of January we should have everyone back."

CEO Maheia estimates that over 50% of schools will be approved for reopening on January 10.



*Diane Maheia*

## Seven Belizeans get New Year's Eve Honors



*Senator Elena Smith and Joel "Dara" Robinson*

by *Charles Gladden*

BELIZE CITY, Sun. Jan. 2, 2022

Seven remarkable Belizeans, who have been instrumental in the development of the nation throughout the years, were honored by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth the Second, at the end of 2021. The appointments of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George and the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire were announced on New Year's Eve by the Office of the Governor-General.

For his contribution to entrepreneurship and the community, Sean Feinstein was named a Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Civil Division. Acting Chief Justice, Michelle Arana was honored for her contribution to the field of law and public service; while, Gordon Roe was honored for his contribution to entrepreneurship and the community. Both Arana and Roe were named Ordinary Officers of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (O.B.E.). Honored as Ordinary Members of the Civil Division of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.) are Florencia Castillo, for her contribution to the community, Dr. Marcelo Coyi for his contribution to the medical profession and the

community, Joel "Dara" Robinson for his contribution to the community, and Senator Elena Smith, for her contribution to education and unionism.

In an interview on KREM News, Senator Smith commented on her reaction to receiving such an award. "I think first off, I have to thank God. I have to say thanks to my family, because many days my children went without me being around. I saw it, and I don't know how to react. I have been teaching for 37 years now, I have given over 20 consecutive [years] of my life to unionism. I have served at the local level of my branch and I ended up at a national level," she said.

"My mind went back to 2005. I was one of the persons on the frontlines, and we really did a number on the government that year; it was a PUP government. In 2016, the BNTU stood up again, and it was a UDP government, and this year, it's a PUP government again, and we stood up our longest strike ever in 2021," she further noted.

Senator Smith stated that she does not want this award to be a suggestion of any political affiliation on her part.

"I don't want this award coming to me under this government at this time to maybe put a cloud over the union that people might want to look at it in a political way," she said.

## IFSC rebranded FSC

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

Effective January 1, 2022, the International Financial Services Commission (FSC) has been rebranded and will now be known as just the Financial Services



Commission (FSC). The rebranding was done after the passage of the Securities Industry Act 2021 and widens the scope of the FSC's responsibilities within the Belizean financial system.

The amended legislation mandates the newly rebranded FSC to include in its responsibilities: "facilitating capital formation and economic growth, protecting investors from unfair, improper or fraudulent practices, fostering development of fair and efficient capital markets and confidence in capital markets in or from within Belize, reducing systemic risk, promoting public understanding of the financial system, including awareness of the benefits and risks of different kinds

of investments or other financial activities."

The amendment to the Securities Industry Act is in line with this administration's goal of transforming the Belizean financial service sector so that it is easier for both domestic and foreign investors to do business.

The new FSC will work with stakeholders over the next few months to implement those new provisions outlined in the Securities Industry Act 2021. The release from the FSC says the new provisions are, "critical to deepening [the] financial system in Belize and to provide Belizeans with additional opportunities for safe investments and creating wealth."



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# Unions supporting cane farmers

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

The National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) has been in dialogue with the cane farmers associations and ASR/BSI in regard to the recent impasse in the industry which delayed the start of the sugar crop. NTUCB's president, Luke Martinez, in an interview with CTV3, said that they were getting the facts from both parties and identifying areas in which they could encourage government to make meaningful interventions. The show of support included some teachers from the Orange Walk and Corozal branch of the Belize National Teachers Union. Their leader, Senator Elena Smith, was also present, and told local media that union members must unite on all causes affecting workers.

"We must understand as workers that we must not just sit by, and watch other workers being taken advantage of, and we do nothing or say nothing. We must show support, for whichever group it is. As long as they are workers, we too are workers, and when we are doing our demonstrations, whatever that may be, we have support as well. So, if you want to ensure that people's rights are respected, that they are treated fairly, then you ought to give that support," Senator Smith said.



**Elena Smith – BNTU president and Luke Martinez – NTUCB president**

Luke Martinez, president of the NTUCB, stated that they simply wanted an amicable end to the impasse and for farmers to win. He gave remarks preceding the signing of the interim agreement on Friday and concurred with Senator Smith that intervention for the working class, in this case cane farmers, is very important. He encouraged local media to cover the story of cane farmers and their plight.

Since an interim agreement has now been signed, the BSCFA and ASR/BSI will now be returning to the

negotiation table to finalize a new commercial agreement. A looming issue is the allegation that the mill has been encouraging farmers who are members of the association to sign on to individual cane delivery contracts. This would diminish the membership of the largest sugar association if

farmers decide to opt-in.

Senator Elena Smith commented that this move is akin to union-busting, and in a conversation with ASR/BSI, said that the trade unions are opposed to the dividing of the association.

"We tried to put forth to them that we don't expect, or we don't want for BSI to be doing things that would be dividing the association. So, in unions, we say union-busting, and it would be the same. If you are going around the association and going to farmers individually, then that's a sign of — you know -- you're busting the association. That's what you're trying to do in essence, and we have said to them, listen, that's not the way how we operate. You should not operate in that type of fashion. There's an association. You respect their right as an association, and you go through them, not to individual farmers, because when you do that, you are deliberately breaking up these associations by that kind of action," Senator Smith said.

## 6 cruise ships in one day

*Despite celebration within the tourism industry of the busiest cruise ship day since the cruise sector's reopening, the highly transmissible Omicron variant of COVID-19 remains a concern.*

by **Khaila Gentle**

BELIZE CITY, Thurs. Dec. 30, 2021

Thursday, December 30 was the busiest day for Belize's cruise tourism sector since the resumption of cruise ship arrivals to the country in July of 2021. According to a press release from the Belize Tourism Board, a total of 6 cruise ships, with a combined total of over 14,000 passengers, arrived at the country's shores on that day. The BTB noted that the arrival of these 6 ships "marks an important milestone, as the cruise sector continues to recover."

As of December, there has been a fifty percent recovery rate within the cruise sector, and it is anticipated that the sector will have fully recovered by winter of 2022.

The BTB also stated that they, along with their cruise industry partners, are continuously working on complying with and improving all necessary health protocols to address concerns related to the pandemic.

The statement was issued on the heels of a press release from the Ministry of Health and Wellness which warned Belizeans that the COVID-19 Omicron variant is most likely already present in the country. The variant, while causing milder symptoms than its Delta counterpart, has been found to be highly transmissible and is believed to be responsible for the majority of recent cases.

In its press release, the BTB stated, "Four ships, including the *Celebrity Apex*, *Carnival Pride*, *Carnival Dream*, and *Carnival Breeze*, called to the Belize City FSTV port. Two ships, the *Norwegian Dawn* and *Norwegian Breakaway*, called to Harvest Caye in southern Belize."



Photo by: Mike Fairbanks

**Carnival cruise ship off the coast of Belize**

## GoB shortens Covid-19 isolation time

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

The Deputy Director of Health Services has released a memo which announces a reduction in the isolation period for persons infected with Covid-19. The directive handed down from the Ministry of Health and Wellness has established a shorter isolation period of 10 days for members of the general public who test positive for the COVID-19 virus — four days less than the 14-day isolation period that had previously been required.

Essential workers, however, will be away from their places of employment for a shorter time than

what is being afforded to other citizens, since their isolation time has been reduced from a 10-day period to seven days. Those essential workers, listed in the SI, are typically on the frontline of the pandemic and are at higher risk of contracting the virus.

These shortened periods will be applicable for infected persons who have been asymptomatic for at least 3 days, without needing any additional medication. However, an extended isolation period might be required for certain persons with delayed recovery if a medical practitioner sees fit.

## New Year babies

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

This morning the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH) announced the birth of the first baby to be delivered at the hospital for the new year. The occasion is usually marked by that institution as a sign of hope and renewal for the new year. Joezeelee Estrada gave birth to a baby boy, weighing 7 pounds 3 ounces, at 9:39 a.m. on New Year's Day—a rather late arrival in comparison to previous New Year's Day births at the hospital.

The post from the KMH says, "The New Year is a time of hope and renewal for the future. And nothing punctuates that more than the birth of babies. Our New Year Babies came a bit late this year, with the first birth

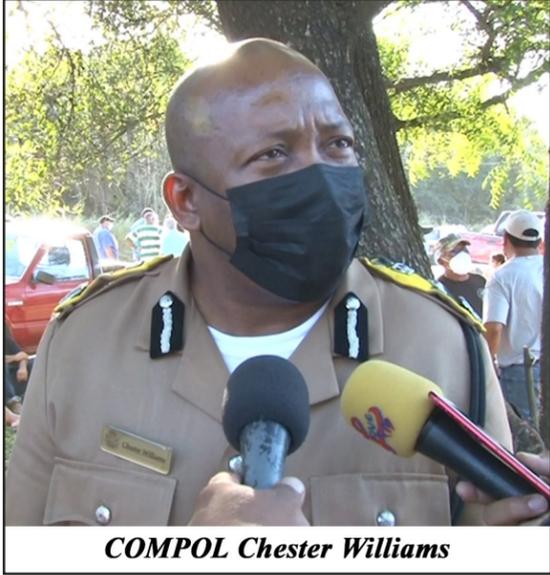


at 9:39 on New Year's Day."

The second baby born at the KMH for this year is a girl, born to Shala Smith. Her name is Shaya.

We express congratulations to both mothers and welcome the newest Belizean citizens to our country and world.

# 3 firefighters fined for mask violations



COMPOL Chester Williams

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

Three firefighters in Santa Elena were each fined \$500 for not wearing masks after being spotted maskless by police last Thursday while they were changing shifts on the fire station compound. It was reported that the officers entered the compound and charged them for not wearing masks

in public.

“It is a public place and the law is clear. If you are in a public place, you must wear a mask. The same way how we deal with police officers in the police station or in the police station compound who are not wearing masks, we ticket them. So what makes the fireman or whoever different? I saw they went on social media and rant and raged and called the police officers all kinds of names for doing their job. That’s not how you address issues,” stated Commissioner of Police Chester Williams.

He went on to say, “If it were that they were aggrieved by what the officers have done, they could have contacted me and I certainly would have done something to address it for them. But the fact that they went on social media and insulted the police, call the police all kinds of names for doing their job, I am not going to intervene. The ticket is going to take its course.”

# Wil Maheia and the BTV show appreciation for Belize’s Coast Guard and BDF

by Khaila Gentle

BARRANCO, Toledo District, Fri. Dec. 31, 2022

Wil Maheia, leader of the Belize Territorial Volunteers (BTV), alongside several BTV members, traveled to Barranco this past weekend to show appreciation to the security personnel who guard Belize’s southern waters.



The Belize Coast Guard and the Belize Defence Force work year-round guarding the country’s waters which are located close to Guatemalan territory, and this past holiday weekend was no different. In an expression of gratitude to the Coast Guard and BDF for their tireless work, the BTV hosted a barbecue on New Year’s Eve in their honor.

In a statement of appreciation, Maheia had the following to say:

“We want to applaud the Belize Defence Force and the Belize Coast Guard for doing a wonderful job. Usually, five or ten years ago, we come into these areas, and we would be encountered by many Guatemalan fishing boats. Today, the only boats that we encounter are Belizean fishing boats. So, we want to say thank you to the troops, thanks to the BDF and the Coast Guard for keeping our waters free of illegal fishing.”

# PM Briceño is incoming CARICOM chairman

(From page 1)

*The Prime Minister will be assuming the position of CARICOM chairman next month. In his first statement, he asserts that COVID-19 recovery remains a priority*

by Khaila Gentle

BELMOPAN, Thurs. Dec. 30, 2021

Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño will be sworn in as the acting chairman of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) next month. On Thursday, he issued his first statement as incoming chairman in the form of a New Year’s Day address. In it, he noted that 2022 is being ushered in with hope and optimism, but he also pointed out the importance of recovering from the social and economic turmoil caused by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years. The PM especially stressed the importance of increased vaccinations, as the vaccination rate across the Caribbean remains low.

He went on to note the importance of regional cooperation in creating a prosperous Caribbean Community, stating that “notwithstanding the immense challenges ahead and the inherent risks and vulnerabilities that have always accompanied our existence, the Community possesses the requisite capacities, strategies and plans, and the will and courage to forge a resilient and prosperous Caribbean Community.”

According to the PM’s address, at the forefront of CARICOM’s 2022 agenda are advancements in food production and security, further integration of digital technology into our community, formation of strategic alliances with other countries—including those in Africa and Central America—and greater relief for the disaster-stricken Haiti.

“The work of the Community’s Special Ministerial Task Force on Food Production and Food Security will be critically important in the

coming year, advancing actions to stimulate economic growth and fortifying our food systems against supply chain disruptions,” said the Prime Minister.

Regarding efforts to digitally transform the Caribbean, PM Briceño spoke on advancing CARICOM’s Regional Digital Development Strategy. And in regards to forming strategic alliances, he made mention of several potential allies.

“We will be seeking to build on the successful first CARICOM-Africa Summit which identified several areas for common action, including climate change and the application of a Multidimensional Vulnerability Index to allow for the inclusion of more than just income-based criteria to assess eligibility for concessionary finance.

“We welcome the approaches by our friends in the Pacific and the Indian Oceans, and look forward to consolidating our partnership with them, as we make common cause with fellow SIDS through AOSIS,” said the PM.

He also brought attention to sustainable development and to confronting the “catastrophic, immediate and slow-onset impacts of climate change occurring in our Small Island and Low-Lying Coastal Developing States.”

PM Briceño will be replacing outgoing CARICOM chairman, the Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne. Hon. Briceño ended his address on a positive note — commending the former chairman on his leadership over the past six months and reminding the community of our “enduring Caribbean resilience.”

# One person killed in Southern Highway collision

*Motorcycle and bicycle collided on the Southern Highway — leaving two persons injured and one dead*

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Sun. Jan. 2, 2022

Two persons were injured and a man lost his life in a road traffic accident that occurred on the Southern Highway on Friday, December 31, 2021. Police who went to the scene of the accident found a motorcycle on the side of the road and a bicycle on the opposite side.

Lying in an apparently unconscious state near the bicycle was a 26-year-old laborer, who also had a cut wound on his left leg. He was identified as Luis Ba. A second male person, identified as a 36-year-old Belizean laborer, Efrain Show, was bleeding from his head near the motorcycle. Also, a third person, 26-year-old Henry Coy, who is also a Belizean laborer, was

seen with an open wound to his head.

According to initial police reports, Coy and Show were traveling together on a motorcycle when Coy lost control of the motorbike, which hit Ba, who was knocked off his bicycle, and sustained injuries which later caused his death. All three men were transported to the Punta Gorda Hospital, where Luis Ba succumbed to his injuries while receiving treatment.

Police currently suspect that Coy might have been under the influence of alcohol at the time of the collision. Samples of his body fluids were taken from him and will be tested to determine whether that was indeed the case. Currently, police are investigating.



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# 2022 is here. Stay sweet, Belize!

“Stay as sweet as you are... don’t let a thing ever change you...” — Nat King Cole

Sun. Jan. 2, 2022

The New Year in Belize started with a glorious, sunshine morning, with a fresh southeasterly breeze, and clear blue sky... what a day! What a day for the outdoors, for going to the country or the cayes, for “fun and games” of all sorts! And then we commenced the action with the exciting Krem New Year’s Day Cycling Classic, “from the border to the boulevard,” coming to us live and in living color via Krem Radio and TV, as well as from Andrew Ordonez’s Facebook page, through which, from his motorcycle, he gave his personal live commentaries. “Belize nice,” indeed (Leroy “Base” Castillo); and although all the Covid-19 restrictions couldn’t deter some of the cycling faithful from drawing near to the Boulevard FINISH line, they were still hampered from the traditional outpouring of affection we as a people have become accustomed to on these occasions. We sure need to be free from this pandemic, so we can loosen up again, and start giving each other those big Belizean hugs we’ve all been missing. Nevertheless, with the many ups and downs, the hard times and struggles, Belize is still a little paradise, and our warm and friendly people are as much an integral part of the Belize experience as the crystal Caribbean waters or the lush green forests and sparkling waterfalls. Tourism has become a major part of our economy, and while there may be threats to the “Belizean product” from within and without, in the final analysis it comes down to us, the Belizean people, to decide if we will face and overcome those challenges to preserve this precious Jewel for future generations of Belizeans.

The Covid-19 pandemic has dealt us a hard blow for almost two years now, but we are not giving up. A majority of citizens have

taken the vax, and more and more are getting “the sense” of what’s best for protecting their health and that of their loved ones, and abiding by the prevention rules of masking, social distancing and hand-washing/sanitizing. While we brace ourselves for the impending invasion of the crazy-spreading Omicron variant, and need to do our best to avoid overwhelming our hospitals with too many Covid patients, we can hold on to the hope that it might just be the last desperate thrust of this terrible disease, before it gradually fades away into becoming just a traditional, non-lethal flu. That will be the day! But until then, we have to keep the pressure on, do everything we can to prevent infection, until that day comes when our health authorities can finally announce the “All Clear.”

The new Government has been doing its part their first year in office. Not perfect; they have made some mistakes, but they have accomplished a lot in a short time and under very difficult circumstances, of course with the support and quiet sacrifice of public officers and other citizens. There have been strides in agriculture, in land distribution, housing and infrastructure, and the so-called “Blue Economy”, where conservation efforts have dovetailed nicely with servicing

our debt obligations while enhancing our tourism product, tourism being still a major plank in the overall Belizean economy. And it may be in the area of tourism that the Belizean people can lend the biggest hand in ensuring the growth and sustainability of this industry which can benefit all Belizeans; but it will take a keen eye from Government to make that a reality.

Crime and violence, particularly murders, have increased across the globe as societies endure the economic impact of the pandemic and the restrictions imposed by Covid-19 protocols; and Belize is no exception. Besides, we had a serious violence and murder problem even before the arrival of Covid-19. But we are small, and our economy still depends heavily on tourism. And in Belize, unlike the mighty USA, there are no “unemployment benefits” for young heads of households to satisfy hungry bellies at home; so it is incumbent on government to see that there is fair play in the job market, and that unscrupulous employers are not taking advantage of “illegal immigrants” to the detriment of scores of job-seeking long-time Belizeans. (Normalizing their illegal status won’t help the situation; Government should demand more aid from UNHCR to help sustain refugees in Belize.) The more citizens have a paying job to take home some cash, the more bellies are full, the less tension in all our relationships.

Our social agents and counselors and political representatives need to talk more to our people, to win their hearts and minds toward a new outlook. But “full belly kyahn tell hungry belly fi kip heart”. We must tackle the food/job problem first, for every Belizean. Then we can talk to our people, and then maybe they will listen. Then tell them, that we, WE, all of us are responsible for killing 100 plus Belizeans a year. If you see or hear a brother talking “negative”, and you encourage him to go and do “schupidness”, then you are part of that murder. And if you sit quiet, and don’t try and talk him out of it, it’s the same, because you missed an opportunity to stop another killing. Mothers! Fathers! Brothers! Sisters! We can turn Belize around and stop the murders, if each of us, whenever we see it developing, speak to our son, daughter, brother, sister or friend, and show them why “i no mek no sense”. We the people can save Belize, turn this madness around; but each one of us has to do our part. When another murder happens, WE did it. Too many times a troubled soul is crying out for “someone to stop me”; but no one shows the love and courage to say, “i no mek sense, bro”; there is a better way. And when the awful deed is done, two lives are destroyed, the killer and the dead. And the net effect of it all is more sadness in our community and bad business for our tourism.

Celebrities from all over the world have come to our shores to enjoy the wonderful climate, the privacy, the awesome natural beauty, and the warmth and genuineness of the Belizean people. Those who are benefiting the most from the tourism product need to be aware, or be made aware, that the widening gap between rich and poor is bad for the future of the industry, because crime will continue to escalate. Where there is tremendous wealth in plain view of the desperate poor, the situation could become explosive.

Our Prime Minister has expressed his concern about the threat of narco-trafficking, noting that because of the tremendous amount of wealth the cartels possess, they could expand their influence over the country, in effect creating a drug state in certain areas, like they have done in parts of Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. But P.M. Briceño was hopeful that we are different, in his words, “... because we are small, we have that real love for one another, love for our country, and it is something that we know together that there is no force on earth that can break us...”

For 2022, it would do well if Government made a resolution to see that every Belizean mouth is fed, by any means necessary. After all, our elected government is blessed with the power of taxation. And we, the Belizean people, with full bellies and grateful hearts, can then talk and counsel each other toward peace, against all violence, and stop the senseless murders that have been causing so much sorrow and grief to stifle the joy and happiness in our sweet Belize.

Happy New Year, all!



(estb. 1969)

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# Texas, cotton, and slavery

In relocating his plantation from the Upper South, Joseph Weisiger became a small player in a big process: the transformation of Texas into a landscape dominated by cotton and slaves. In 1845, when the United States annexed Texas, the number of slaves within the rogue nation that Mexico still claimed as a rebellious province totaled a mere 17,000. Following admission to the United States, however, Texas's slave population soared, reaching 180,000 by 1860. Even so, Texas legislators continued to insist on the necessity of more "slave labor to meet the wants of the State in reducing the almost unlimited acres of sugar and cotton land to cultivation," and Texas newspapers proclaimed, "We want more slaves. We need them."

For many Americans, this explosive growth underscored an unmistakable fact: slavery's destiny along the border. Most immediately, that future meant the newly cultivated cotton fields of Texas.

But just as Texas had slipped out of Mexican control in 1836, so, too, did it seem that other sections of the continent would soon fall into the American grasp, as California, New Mexico, and Arizona had in 1848. Many saw no reason why Mexico should not relinquish more territory in the near future, or why the tropical side of Cuba, so suited to slave agriculture and so close to U.S. shores, should not become another state. Expansionists thrilled to the prospect of transforming the entire Gulf of Mexico into a basin ringed with US territories: a "great American lake." "I want Cuba," enthused Senator Albert Gallatin Brown of Mississippi. "I want Tamaulipas, Potosi, and one or two more Mexican States, and I want them all for the same reason - for the planting or spreading of slavery."

- from pgs. 8, 9, of THE STRANGE CAREER OF WILLIAM ELLIS: The

# 18-year-old arrested for Derron Hernandez's murder

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

An 18-year-old identified as Daniel Tillett was charged for the murder of 23-year-old call center agent Derron Hernandez last Friday. Hernandez was shot in the chest last week at the close of the Christmas weekend shortly after returning to his Raccoon Street home from the call center at which he worked.

He was shot in his yard sometime around 6:00 p.m. that day. Reports were that he had been in an altercation the day before with his suspected assailant, now believed to be Tillett, and was shot by the young man (who had gone to his gate that evening and called his name) when

Texas slave who became a Mexican millionaire, by Karl Jacoby, W. W. Norton & Company, 2016



**Derron Hernandez, deceased**

he exited his home to take a look outside.

Tillett is also reportedly an employee of a call center, but it has not been confirmed that the two men worked at the same establishment. He is expected to be arraigned and remanded to the Belize Central Prison on this indictable offense.

## Vacancy Notice

Refugees Department in partnership with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) - Belize Office

Applications are invited from suitably qualified persons to fill Five (5) positions of Refugee Eligibility Clerk under a contractual arrangement for two (2) years with the Refugees Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Foreign Trade and Immigration, Belmopan.

**1. ACCOUNTABILITY OBJECTIVE:** Responsible for conducting interviews and other relevant research to assess asylum claims and for the preparation of written reports of assessments conducted to determine Refugee Status; submits reports to the Refugee Eligibility Committee for the review and consideration of Refugee Status applications.

**2. NATURE AND SCOPE:** The Refugee Eligibility Clerk is required to review all applications submitted to the Refugees Department by persons seeking asylum in Belize. The incumbent conducts the relevant research and security checks of applications and supporting documents received at the Refugees Department. The incumbent researches country of origin information, applicable laws and regulations, requests background checks and conducts thorough interviews with asylum seekers and relevant family members to gather detailed and accurate information to further analyze applicants' eligibility for the granting of Refugee Status under Belize's Refugee Act, Chapter 165 of the Laws of Belize.

### 3. ANALYSIS OF POSITION:

#### A. Essential Duties and Responsibilities

**1. REVIEWS** each application file and prepares for interview session with individuals and required members of families seeking asylum by engaging in research of relevant Country of Origin Information and other additional documents to adjudicate asylum claims.

**2. COUNSELS** asylum seekers on the Refugee Status Determination process and the asylum seekers'/refugees' rights and responsibilities.

**3. ASSISTS** with identification of asylum-seekers with vulnerabilities who need urgent intervention and appraises Director of such so that the issue can be resolved.

**4. CONDUCTS** eligibility interviews of new asylum seekers for Refugee Status Determination and family members in the application, in a thorough yet compassionate manner, using a range of interviewing techniques, in order to gather sufficiently accurate and detailed information to assess eligibility for Refugee Status.

**5. CONDUCTS** process to request security/background checks on asylum-seekers as a part of the process in adjudicating claims; carries out follow-up researches to verify information gleaned from interviews as needed.

**6. ANALYZES** the information gathered during interviews, identifies and uses other relevant documentation such as Country of Origin Information and security check; and interprets and applies appropriate policies, regulations, statutes, to make eligibility determinations.

**7. PREPARES** objective, well-argued, and reasoned assessments and recommendations with supporting evidence for granting refugee status to asylum seeker, in accordance with the Belize Refugees Act, for forwarding to the Refugees Eligibility Committee for their deliberation in granting Refugee Status to asylum seekers.

**8. SUPPORTS** the work of the Department and Refugee Eligibility Committee in preparing well documented assessments to guide and inform decision making processes; attends monthly meetings of the Refugee Eligibility Committee so as

to be consulted and/or make clarification on matters relating to Refugees Status Determination Reports submitted for their consideration.

**9. SUBMITS** monthly reports providing information on the status of all claims, discrepancies resolved, countries of origin, number of cases, noted trends and other related data to the Director, Refugees Department.

### B. QUALIFICATIONS, KNOWLEDGE and EXPERIENCE:

Minimum of Associate Degree in Social Work, Law, International Relations, Political Science, Social Sciences or related field.

Must be fluent in written and spoken English and Spanish Language.

### Plus/Assets

Working experience in interviewing, counselling, conducting research, report writing skills and application of relevant interviewing procedures and principles.

### C. COMPETENCES/SKILLS:

Good analytical skills and must demonstrate the communication skills required to interact productively with Public Service officials, officials of government agencies, other stakeholders, refugees/asylum seekers and the general public. Specialized proficiency in the use of computer application for word processing, spreadsheet development, electronic form creation, power point presentation and related.

### 4. REPORTING RESPONSIBILITY:

The Refugee Eligibility Clerk functions under the direct supervision of the Refugee Eligibility Officer

### 5. SALARY:

Basic Salary of \$15,908 per annum on a contractual basis for two (2) years

### 6. APPLICATION PROCEDURES:

Application Package should contain:

1. Cover letter briefly explaining interest, experience, and competence in the area
2. Comprehensive Résumé
3. Copy of degrees/certificates
4. List of at least two references
5. Copy of valid social security card.

Interested persons in possession of the required qualifications for the post are invited to submit a complete application package via email to [refugees\\_department@immigration.gov.bz](mailto:refugees_department@immigration.gov.bz) or directly to the Refugees Department, Belmopan no later than Friday, 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022 or to the following address:

Director  
Refugees Department  
Mountain View Boulevard  
Belmopan City  
**Vacancy – Refugee Eligibility Clerk**

# Hurray for happy endings

by Colin Hyde

How they say it— for the life of me? Well, for the life of me I don't understand why people make up stories with bad or sad endings. Daily the world's headlines are dominated by bad and sad stories, cruel, painful stories, so heck, why? Some people say it's important to be real. But you shouldn't take real too far, because real has more than enough real hurts to go around.

Much of the hip hop and dancehall crowd really got lost in real. They started celebrating violence against police officers, men who disrespect women and take advantage of them, and glory in violent revenge acts and snorting drugs. What a sick world we live in sometimes. Hmm, forgive me for drifting there. It was only to find examples of people getting it all wrong.

Tell me happy stories— Aha, I like the story of my fourth cousin telling his dad, my third cousin, *don't tell me no fish stories about big ones that got away; if you didn't catch it and bring it home to eat, or sell, don't tell.* Tell me

about the big, bad shark that opened wide his dangerous mouth filled with terrible teeth and as he moved to bite down on the girl's chubby thigh she, by the grace of God, had a foot-long steel rod in her hand, and thinking quickly she stuck it in his mouth...and that Jaws is now as docile as a nurse or whale shark, its nutrition coming now solely from sucking in seaweed, plankton and dogteeth eggs.

Bah, by tomorrow I'll be feeling sorry for that shark, the shame of his being reduced to eating microscopic organisms instead of solid food. So, instead—our girl, who did a little boxing, solely for self-defense reasons, of course not to beat up guys, she, she punched that bad bohga in the nose. And that punch, it was like a thousand bolts, the electric shock ran through that shark's body from the snotty nose to the tail, and he never, ever tried to bite a girl or boy again. In fact, he became a very friendly shark; he even tried to become an entertainer at the Hol Chan Marine Park. But he didn't get a welcome because of his teeth and his breed.

Uh-uh, that's not a happy ending.

That's so sad, so sad nobody trusting him. We all need trust. One day we'll trust the UDP again. The PUP say, not in a hurry, don't forget the madabig letdown for 13 sakkin long years. And that reminds me, look what his friends did to Dean Barrow! He called the PUP whited sepulcher, and teef, and layad, and his friends, his friends, they made him look like a kettle on a faya haat. Bah, that was not a happy ending.

We need a happy ending. Aha, here comes...Johnny and his Blu band! Hurray for the NEW PUP. They are here to save us. Whoa there, you're not getting it. It's fiction. There has to be a happy ending.

## Hart hit the ending for six

I told someone that I thought Hart struggled with the endings of his fiction stories, but in my books, in his latest, "The Crossing on Mahogany Street", he juiced it to the rind. Maybe I'm not the measure. I get the chills when the singers/musicians pour the passion into Land of the Gods, definitely when it's sung *like a march, not a dirge*. My, I needed a washrag and a *steady yourself, control the breathing* when the story climaxed with such joy, after so much pain.

I said I'm not the great measure, and I wouldn't be volunteering my opinion of the piece if Belize's elite literati wasn't closed shop with the critiquing of local art. I have great respect for a number of Belizean writers, and I didn't say our masters of prose were mean, not at all. But, ehm, if you had to hazard an answer to the lukewarm response to local pieces in our marketplace, no one would blame you if you put narrowness as a possibility.

It's a cultural failure that we are so hesitant to throw the necessary commentary. Stop fretting if people don't like your critique. Hate lies, hate distortions, hate misrepresentations, and remember every second of the day that God has many strings, one of them leads directly to you, and nothing in this world can sever that.

We have a vacuum, and in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king. The fact is that most any say is better than no say at all. I say that in this 2022, the non-politicians in our country should fight for a bigger share of the attention.

Looking back at "The Crossing of Mahogany Street", there's just this one part, in the middle of the story, where Hart was a little too mature for me. I didn't like the idea of the hero, Lee, killing anyone, even in the noble defense of a friend. Okay, he hit the guy with a stick, didn't shoot or stab him.

Okay, that's the real of the world we live in, young men dying in the hundreds in the streets.

Yes, I think someone said that good art mimics real life, but I think it can do without the tragedy. I would have much preferred if the villain had just had the sense beaten into him, not his breath beaten out. But maybe it's the gravity of having a terrible misfortune that helped make the ending so exciting. Ah, a sweet happy ending for us softies. Thank you, Mr. Hart Tillett.

## Stop play lost, Chebat seh

Hands down, Michel Chebat wins the infomercial of the year for the way he called out vax hesitators in that clip that has everyone, even the, ehm, hogs who took the hit, running for a place in front of the teevee. Chebat has a direct style. If he were a boxer, he'd walk straight across the ring and start flinging punches, and he wouldn't stop until somebody drop. This is a guy who doesn't doubt himself. And he believes, no offense, that our failure to contain this virus is because *"sohn people still di play loss."*

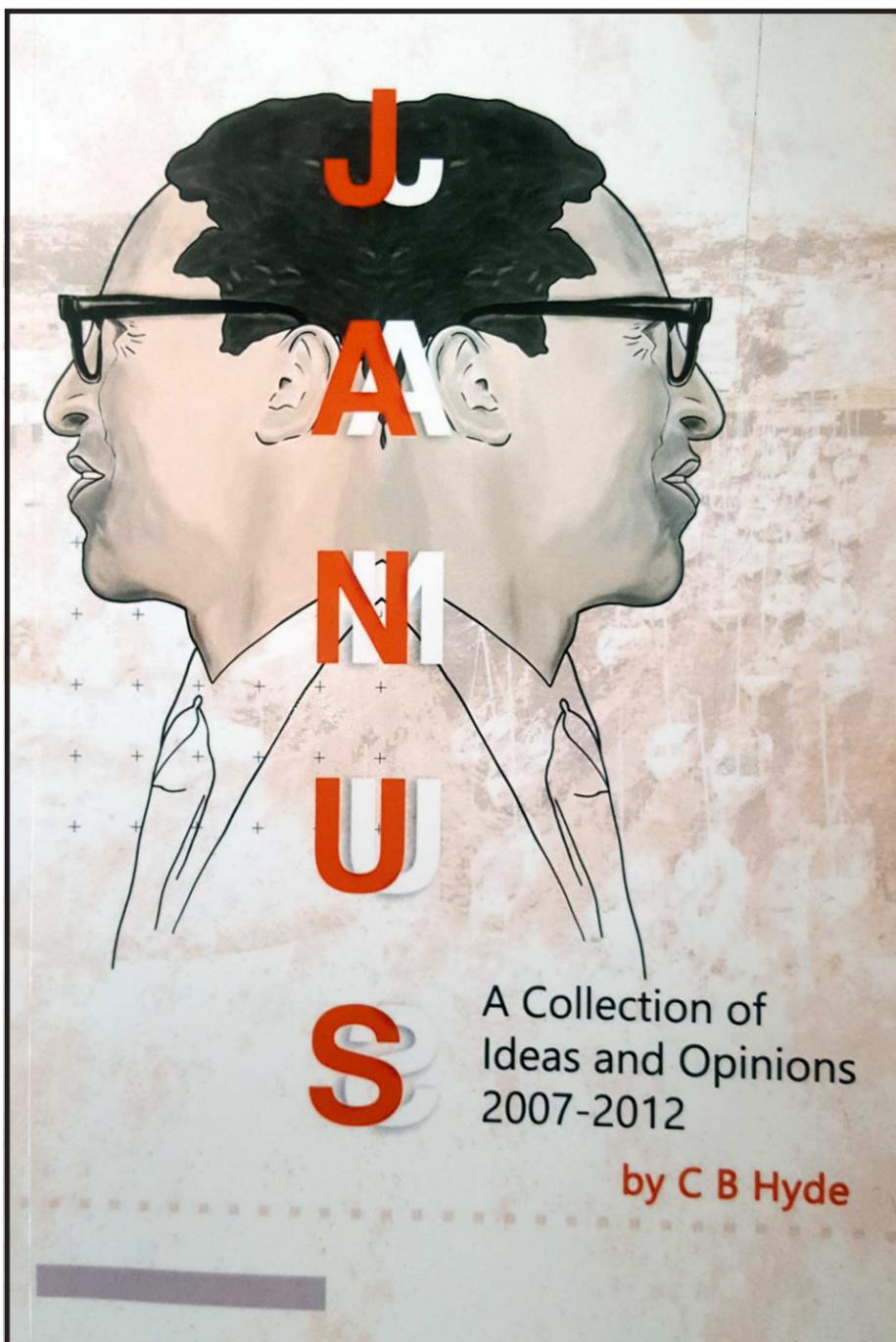
Belize can't wait for the next general election, when Dr. Manza throws his hat into the ring for the UDP in Cayo West. The bigger show would be in Cayo North, but after Dr. Figueroa had a taste of politics he got to like it, and he is now upper hierarchy in the red camp. So, Manza, who lapped up his role as media star, will have to settle for a battle against Chebat's colleague, instead of the faceoff he and all of us would prefer.

## Gray has to be mad

So, the story is being whispered about that Andre Gray is mad under his hat. So what? You can't name one senior inventor who hasn't been questioned about the stability of the screws in their head. Wasn't the most celebrated of them all, Nikola Tesla, labeled a lunatic? Of course he was, and the world has to be thankful for that, for minds that invent things can't be confined to a box.

The strangest of things is when a man isn't bowled over by the opposite sex. Tesla wasn't. There are only two types of men who are like that. One of them, it is too early for them to be getting any ink. The other kind, they have extraordinary minds, and they are on a mission to deliver to the world the gifts that God gave them. They will not be distracted.

If Gray is a quarter of those things that they or he says he is, you bet his screws aren't that tight up there.





## El 2022 está aquí. ¡Mantente dulce, Belize!

**“Mantente tan dulce como eres ... no dejes que nada te cambie ...” - Nat King Cole**

Domingo 2 de enero de 2022

El Año Nuevo en Belize comenzó con una gloriosa mañana soleada, con una fresca brisa del sureste y un cielo azul claro ... ¡qué día! ¡Qué día para disfrutar del aire libre, para ir al campo o a los cayos, para diversión y juegos de todo tipo! Y luego comenzamos la acción con el emocionante Clásico de Ciclismo del Día de Año Nuevo de Radio Krem, “desde la frontera hasta el bulevar”, que llegó a nosotros en vivo y a todo color a través de Radio Krem y TV, así como desde la página de Facebook de Andrew Ordonez, a través de la cual, desde su motocicleta, dio sus comentarios personales en vivo. “Belize es bueno”, de verdad (Leroy “Base” Castillo); y aunque todas las restricciones del Covid-19 no pudieron disuadir a algunos de los seguidores del ciclismo de acercarse a la línea de llegada del Boulevard, aún se vieron obstaculizados en expresar la tradicional efusión de afecto a la que nos hemos acostumbrado como pueblo en estas ocasiones. Seguro que necesitamos estar libres de esta pandemia, para que podamos relajarnos nuevamente y comenzar a darnos esos grandes abrazos beliceños que todos nos hemos perdido. Sin embargo, con los muchos altibajos, los tiempos difíciles y las luchas, Belize sigue siendo un pequeño paraíso, y nuestra gente cálida y amistosa es una parte tan integral de la experiencia de Belize como las cristalinas aguas del Caribe o los exuberantes bosques verdes y centelleantes cascadas. El turismo se ha convertido en una parte importante de nuestra economía, y si bien puede haber amenazas para el “producto beliceño” desde adentro y desde afuera, en el análisis final depende de nosotros, el pueblo beliceño, decidir si enfrentaremos y superamos esos desafíos para preservar esta preciosa Joya para las generaciones futuras de beliceños.

La pandemia de Covid-19 nos ha asestado un duro golpe durante casi dos años, pero no nos estamos rindiendo. La mayoría de los ciudadanos han tomado la vacuna, y cada vez son más los que entienden lo que es mejor para proteger su salud y la de sus seres queridos, y acatan las normas de prevención de enmascaramiento, distanciamiento social y lavado/desinfección de manos. Mientras nos preparamos para la inminente invasión de la variante de Omicron que se propaga alocadamente, y debemos hacer todo lo posible para evitar abrumar a nuestros hospitales con demasiados pacientes Covid, podemos aferrarnos a la esperanza de que podría ser el último impulso desesperado de esta terrible enfermedad, antes de que se desvanezca gradualmente y se convierta en una gripe tradicional no letal. ¡Ese será el día! Pero hasta entonces, tenemos que mantener la presión, hacer todo lo posible para prevenir la infección, hasta que llegue el día en que nuestras autoridades sanitarias finalmente puedan anunciar el “Todo despejado”.

El nuevo Gobierno ha estado haciendo su parte durante su primer año en el cargo. No es perfecto; han cometido algunos errores, pero han logrado mucho en poco tiempo y en circunstancias muy difíciles, por supuesto con el apoyo y el sacrificio silencioso de los funcionarios públicos y otros ciudadanos. Ha habido avances en la agricultura, en la distribución de tierra, la vivienda y la infraestructura, y en la llamada “Economía Azul”, donde los esfuerzos de conservación se han adaptado muy bien a nuestras obligaciones del pago de nuestras deudas y al mismo tiempo mejoran nuestro producto turístico, siendo el turismo un elemento importante en la economía de Belize en general. Y puede ser en el área del turismo donde el pueblo beliceño pueda dar la mayor mano para asegurar el crecimiento y la sostenibilidad de esta industria que puede beneficiar a todos los beliceños; pero será necesario un buen ojo por parte del Gobierno para que eso se haga realidad.

El crimen y la violencia, particularmente los asesinatos, han aumentado en todo el mundo a medida que las sociedades soportan el impacto económico de la pandemia y las restricciones impuestas por los protocolos Covid-19; y Belize no es una excepción. Además, teníamos un grave problema de violencia y asesinatos incluso antes de la llegada de Covid-19. Pero somos

pequeños y nuestra economía todavía depende en gran medida del turismo. Y en Belize, a diferencia del poderoso Estados Unidos, no existen “beneficios de desempleo” para los jóvenes jefes de hogar para satisfacer los estómagos hambrientos en casa; por lo que le corresponde al gobierno ver que haya juego limpio en el mercado laboral y que empleadores sin escrúpulos no se aprovechen de los “inmigrantes ilegales” en detrimento de decenas de beliceños que buscan trabajo desde hace mucho tiempo. (Normalizar su situación ilegal no ayudará a la situación; el gobierno debería exigir más ayuda del ACNUR para ayudar a mantener a los refugiados en Belize). Mientras más ciudadanos tengan un trabajo remunerado para llevarse algo de efectivo a casa, más estómagos estarán llenos, y habrá menos tensión en todas nuestras relaciones.

Nuestros agentes sociales y consejeros y representantes políticos necesitan hablar más con nuestra gente, para ganar sus corazones y mentes hacia una nueva perspectiva. Pero “barriga llena no le puede decir a la barriga hambrienta que se mantenga esperanzada”. Primero debemos abordar el problema de la alimentación y el trabajo, para todos los beliceños. Entonces podemos hablar con nuestra gente, y luego tal vez escuchen. Luego se les dice que nosotros, NOSOTROS, todos somos responsables de matar a más de 100 beliceños al año. Si uno ve o escucha a un hermano hablar “negativo”, y lo anima a ir y hacer “tonterías”, entonces uno es parte de ese asesinato. Y si se queda sentado en silencio y no intenta convencerlo de que no lo haga, es lo mismo, porque perdió la oportunidad de detener otro asesinato. ¡Madres! ¡Padres! ¡Hermanos! ¡Hermanas! Podemos darle la vuelta a Belize y detener los asesinatos, si cada uno de nosotros, cada vez que lo veamos dedarrollar, hablamos con nuestro hijo, hija, hermano, hermana o amigo y les mostramos por qué “no tiene sentido”. Nosotros, el pueblo, podemos salvar a Belize, darle la vuelta a esta locura; pero cada uno de nosotros tiene que hacer su parte. Cuando ocurre otro asesinato, NOSOTROS lo hicimos. Demasiadas veces un alma atribulada clama por “alguien que me detenga”; pero nadie muestra el amor y el coraje para decir, “no tiene sentido, hermano”; Hay una mejor manera. Y cuando se comete la terrible acción, dos vidas son destruidas, la del asesino y el muerto. Y el efecto neto de todo esto es más tristeza en nuestra comunidad y malos negocios para nuestro turismo.

Celebridades de todo el mundo han venido a nuestras costas para disfrutar del maravilloso clima, la privacidad, la asombrosa belleza natural y la calidez y autenticidad del pueblo beliceño. Aquellos que se están beneficiando más del producto turístico deben ser conscientes, o se deben volver conscientes, de que la brecha cada vez mayor entre ricos y pobres es mala para el futuro de la industria, porque la delincuencia seguirá aumentando. Donde hay una enorme riqueza a la vista de los pobres desesperados, la situación podría volverse explosiva.

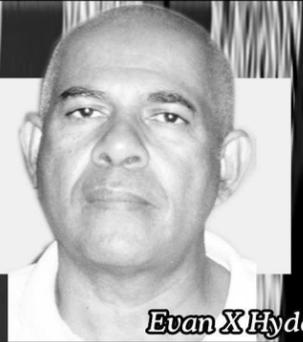
Nuestro Primer Ministro ha expresado su preocupación por la amenaza del narcotráfico, señalando que debido a la tremenda riqueza que poseen los cárteles, podrían expandir su influencia sobre el país, creando de hecho un estado de drogas en ciertas áreas, como lo han hecho en partes de México, Guatemala, Honduras y El Salvador. Pero P.M. Briceno tiene la esperanza de que seamos diferentes, en sus palabras, “...porque somos pequeños, tenemos ese amor real el uno por el otro, amor por nuestro país, y es algo que sabemos, juntos no hay fuerza en la tierra que pueda rompernos...”

Para el 2022, haría bien si el gobierno tomara una resolución para ver que cada boca beliceña sea alimentada, por todos los medios necesarios. Después de todo, nuestro gobierno electo está bendecido con el poder de los impuestos. Y nosotros, el pueblo beliceño, con el estómago lleno y el corazón agradecido, podemos hablar y aconsejarnos los unos a los otros hacia la paz, contra toda violencia, y detener los asesinatos sin sentido que han estado causando tanta tristeza y dolor para sofocar la alegría y la felicidad en nuestro dulce Belize.

¡Feliz año nuevo a todos!



# From the Publisher



Evan X Hyde

My understanding is that Belmopan-based PLUS TV is supported by evangelical churches in the United States. So, I was somewhat surprised at the intensity with which PLUS pastors Louis Wade, Santie Valencia, and Kerm Thimbrel were recently questioning the wisdom of a Government of Belize announcement that immigration amnesty would be granted to “between forty and sixty thousand” people who are living and working in Belize.

I mean no disrespect to the three gentlemen, but it has been my impression for a long time that what the United States government visualizes for Belize is a kind of third, oligarchic Central American republic status in a triangle which would include Guatemala and Honduras. Since the presumption is that most of those who would be granted amnesty here are of Central American origin, then you get the sense of where I am going.

There was one caller on Louis’

show who declared categorically that these “forty to sixty thousand” were not presently resident in Belize, but would be introduced into The Jewel at the appropriate time.

Now where the American evangelicals enter the picture is where their national politics is concerned. Apart from their massive hostility to abortion and the LGBT agenda, American evangelicals want to keep America white, which is to say, they are outraged by these caravans of Central Americans who have been marching through Mexico with the intent of crossing the border into the United States. Dumping some of these Central American marchers in Belize would be just fine with American evangelicals.

When I was growing up in British Honduras, there used to be a semi-official publication called A BRIEF SKETCH OF BRITISH HONDURAS. I remember that where the matter of immigration

was concerned (and it was only briefly dealt with), the author (one A. H. Andersen, if I remember correctly) said that it was a challenge for the colonial authorities to decide how they would move on this, it being the case that the colony was underpopulated, so to speak. (That publication, incidentally, simply disappeared from Belize some decades now.)

Remember that Belize was a Central American anomaly. It was a beachhead inside the Spanish Main where predominantly British pirates had landed and then started importing African slaves to cut down logwood and mahogany trees for export. By the time the Spanish authorities in Mexican Yucatan tried to expel them, the “settlers” had become pretty much black in demographic majority.

There are a lot of Anglophiles here who glorify the 1798 Battle of St. George’s Caye as a decisive one in which their ancestors taught the invading Yucatan Spaniards a lesson, a lesson such that they never attempted another invasion. Well, those of us from the twentieth century knew that the threat from the Spanish element never really went away: it just moved from the north to the west, from Mexico to Guatemala.

But there is a complex history surrounding 1798 which is never taught in Belizean schools, because it involves Napoleon Bonaparte, who was the worst British nightmare in the late 1790s and early 1800s. Emerging as the French powerhouse in the years following the 1789 French Revolution, Napoleon led his men on the battlefield. He was warrior, general, and then emperor. Except for Albion, he controlled Europe, including Spain, in the early 1800s. This was an opportunity for the Mexican people, led by Miguel Hidalgo, to initiate a rebellion against Spanish colonialism in 1810. No one in Mexico had time to pay attention to the settlement in Belize in the early nineteenth century.

Meanwhile, half a million African slaves in San Domingo (Haiti) had rebelled against their minority French slave masters, and the Haitian leader, Toussaint L’Ouverture, ruled both Haiti and what we now know as the Dominican Republic. The Haitian Revolution of 1791 terrified white slave masters in the United States, Cuba, Jamaica, and throughout the Caribbean.

In those days, cotton and cane were very, very lucrative cash crops in this region. (Belize was into mahogany) The more African slaves a European owned, the more cotton or sugar he could produce, and the more wealthy he would become. Many of these slaveowners became so wealthy they returned to their native European countries as aristocrats.

What the Haitian Revolution did was make stark the danger for minority population European slaveowners from indiscriminately increasing the slave majority working their fields and plantations. Belize experienced a post-slavery uprising in 1894, but did not get a full dose of playing with African majority fire until the 1919 Ex-Servicemen’s rebellion.

You know, beloved, there is history and there is power. In Africa before our people were conquered and enslaved, there was a human institution called the GRIOT. The GRIOT was an African man (and I suppose there were also women) whose mind was so exceptional he could memorize and recite history covering centuries. In Africa, then, there was no need for print history. Human institutions preserved history, orally.

In Belize today, because of power realities, it is indispensable that we natives preserve our stories in black and white. That is because the oligarchs own the media and control the schools. Let me give you an example. No one in the media or the education system has ever remarked on the fact that the National Kriol Council (NKC) and the UBAD Educational Foundation were organized in the same year -- 1996. That is because there is a black population in Honduras which is Kriol. When the Central American Black Organization (CABO) was being organized in 1996 by Garifuna leaders from Honduras and Belize, the Kriols in Honduras demanded that the Kriols in Belize be represented in the new CABO. And therein lies a story which the media owned by the oligarchs in Belize do not want to be told. Talk to me, Silvana. Tell me about Texas.

There were black people in Belize who boycotted the only black summit ever held in Belize, in September of 2003. Today, the question is: how many blacks remain in Belize? This is the question which, ultimately, becomes the crux of the matter when we talk about amnesty.

Power to the people.



## MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS

### INVITATION TO BID

#### PROCUREMENT NOTICE

The Ministry of Health & Wellness (MOHW) hereby invites eligible and qualified bidders to submit sealed bids for **COVID-19 LYRA PCR Test Kits**.

All interested bidders are asked to contact the secretary in the Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Health & Wellness, Third Floor, East Block Building, Belmopan (Tel. 822-2325) for the **Instruction to Bidders** and relevant documents. Eligible Bidders must be in accordance with Ministry of Health & Wellness requirements as indicated in the **Instruction to Bidders**. A fee of \$200.00 made payable to the **Government Treasury utilizing Fees for Bidding Documents - 18017/11617/130/24** is required for the acquisition of the Tender Package. The **receipt must be presented** to the secretary at the point of collecting the Package.

The Tender Package must be collected from the Chief Executive Officer’s (CEO) Secretary – Ministry of Health & Wellness, East Block, Belmopan on **January 3<sup>rd</sup> – January 7<sup>th</sup> 2022** between the hours of **8AM to 3:30PM**. All tender submissions must be returned to the CEO Secretary - Ministry of Health & Wellness no later than **Monday January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022 at 2AM**. Late bids will be rejected.

Please be prepared to submit relevant samples **immediately** upon request.

# Wokeness!

There was a time, not long ago, when men were men, women were women, and we believed in hope and love and trust and kindness and respect! One was either white or black or brown; to me yellow is very disparaging, when it comes to describing a race of people, but you get my drift. Some were proud of whom they were, others not so much! Everyone kept in their own lane, the fluidity in genders and race was almost non-existent; you were who you were. We called a spade a spade, and owned up to who we were, except in cases where it could be detrimental to do so, socially, financially or for religious reasons, or for one's own safety! We could express our sentiments without fear of retribution or recrimination. At times we could be insensitive, even maybe downright mean, but we had the right to be blunt and critical and say what was on our minds and in our hearts!

Maybe it's because of my age, maybe it's because I don't want things shoved down my throat that I don't agree with, maybe it's because I have a right not to conform to the zeitgeist of the day, being woke, maybe all those are the reasons why I feel old and maybe out of touch. I see things the way Bill Maher, or Dave Chappelle, the greatest comedian since Richard Pryor, see them. If you are not politically correct, if you don't recognize all the different genders that populate our vocabulary these days, if you don't see the world the way the younger generation does, then you should be ostracized! You should be shut up, and shut out! There are so many great artists, politicians, writers, who have all but disappeared because of some inadvertent comment, years ago! Not being woke, is a crime.

There are those who take advantage of this time of confusion by pushing the envelope, believing that they can get away with anything, that no one will notice, or just accept whatever behavior, however deviant, for fear of being branded xenophobic, homophobic, sexist! They have enormous power and prestige, and use it to their advantage, to blackmail those of us who are still "asleep," to bend and submit to their will, their way of life.

I want to spend the rest of my life in a world where I see things as they are, unencumbered by mores I could never adhere to, succumb to. I'm not a religious person; that just makes you hate more than love, in my opinion. I just want to live in a world I understand, not being forced to accept the ways of how a vocal minority, or maybe it is a majority, see the world. I don't really care what anyone thinks of me or what I write; at least I can say what I feel, without being censored!

"But, ma! I don't want to go to America! Shut up and swim. "You can't tell jokes like that anymore.

Glen

# FROM THE PUBLISHER en Español

Tengo entendido que PLUS TV, con sede en Belmopan, cuenta con el apoyo de iglesias evangélicas en los Estados Unidos. Entonces, me sorprendió un poco la intensidad con la que los pastores de PLUS, Louis Wade, Santie Valencia y Kerm Thimbrel cuestionaron recientemente la sabiduría de un anuncio del Gobierno de Belize de que se otorgaría una amnistía migratoria a "entre cuarenta y sesenta mil" personas que están viviendo y trabajando en Belize.

No quiero faltarle el respeto a los tres caballeros, pero durante mucho tiempo he tenido la impresión de que lo que el gobierno de los Estados Unidos visualiza para Belize es una especie de tercera república oligárquica de Centroamérica en un triángulo que incluiría a Guatemala y Honduras. Dado que la presunción es que la mayoría de las personas a las que se les concedería la amnistía aquí son de origen centroamericano, entonces tienen una idea de hacia dónde me dirijo.

Hubo una persona que llamó al programa de Louis que declaró categóricamente que estos "cuarenta a sesenta mil" no residían actualmente en Belize, pero serían introducidos en La Joya en el momento apropiado.

Ahora, donde los evangélicos estadounidenses entran en escena es en lo que respecta a su política nacional. Aparte de su hostilidad masiva al aborto y la agenda LGBT, los evangélicos estadounidenses quieren mantener a Estados Unidos blanco, es decir, están indignados por estas caravanas de centroamericanos que han estado marchando por México con la intención de cruzar la frontera hacia Estados Unidos. Dejar a algunos de estos migrantes centroamericanos en Belize estaría bien para los evangélicos estadounidenses.

Cuando crecía en Honduras Británica, solía haber una publicación semioficial llamada A BRIEF SKETCH OF BRITISH HONDURAS [BOCETO BREVE DE HONDURAS BRITÁNICA]. Recuerdo que en lo que respecta al tema de la inmigración (y solo se trató brevemente), el autor (un tal A.H. Andersen, si mal no recuerdo) dijo que era un desafío para las autoridades coloniales decidir cómo abordarían este asunto, siendo el caso de que la colonia estaba subpoblada, por así decirlo. (Esa publicación, dicho sea de paso, simplemente desapareció de Belize hace algunas décadas).

Recuerden que Belize era una

anomalía centroamericana. Era una cabeza de playa dentro del área de control española, donde los piratas predominantemente británicos habían desembarcado y luego comenzaron a importar esclavos africanos para cortar palo de tinte y árboles de caoba para la exportación. Ya para cuando las autoridades españolas en el Yucatán mexicano intentaron expulsarlos, los "colonos" se habían vuelto prácticamente negros en su mayoría demográfica.

Hay muchos anglófilos aquí que glorifican la Batalla de Cayo San Jorge de 1798 como una batalla decisiva en la que sus antepasados ??les enseñaron una lección a los españoles invasores de Yucatán, una lección tal que nunca intentaron otra invasión. Bueno, nosotros del siglo XX sabíamos que la amenaza del elemento español nunca desapareció: simplemente se trasladó del norte al oeste, de México a Guatemala.

Pero hay una historia compleja en torno a 1798 que nunca se enseña en las escuelas beliceñas, porque involucra a Napoleón Bonaparte, quien fue la peor pesadilla británica a fines de la década de 1790 y principios de la de 1800. Napoleón, que emergió como la potencia francesa en los años posteriores a la Revolución Francesa de 1789, llevó a sus hombres al campo de batalla. Fue guerrero, general y luego emperador. A excepción de Albión, controló Europa, incluida España, a principios del siglo XIX. Esta fue una oportunidad para que el pueblo mexicano, encabezado por Miguel Hidalgo, iniciara una rebelión contra el colonialismo español en 1810. Nadie en México tuvo tiempo de prestar atención al asentamiento en Belize a principios del siglo XIX.

Mientras tanto, medio millón de esclavos africanos en Santo Domingo (Haití) se habían rebelado contra sus minoritarios amos esclavistas franceses, y el líder haitiano, Toussaint L'Ouverture, gobernaba tanto Haití como lo que ahora conocemos como República Dominicana. La Revolución Haitiana de 1791 aterrorizó a los amos esclavistas blancos en los Estados Unidos, Cuba, Jamaica y en todo el Caribe.

En aquellos días, el algodón y la caña eran cultivos comerciales muy, muy lucrativos en esta región. (Belize en ese entonces se dedicaba a la caoba) Cuantos más esclavos africanos poseyera un europeo, más algodón o azúcar podría producir, y más rico se volvería.

Muchos de estos propietarios de esclavos se hicieron tan ricos que regresaron a sus países europeos nativos como aristócratas.

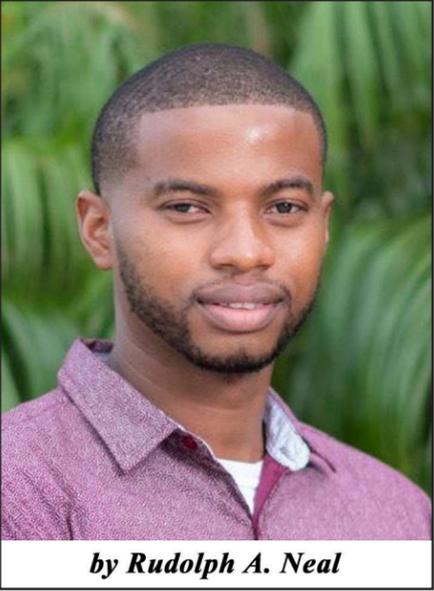
Lo que hizo la Revolución Haitiana fue poner de manifiesto el peligro que corría la población minoritaria de europeos que eran propietarios de esclavos al aumentar indiscriminadamente la mayoría de esclavos que trabaja en sus campos y plantaciones. Belize experimentó un levantamiento posterior a la esclavitud en 1894, pero no recibió una dosis completa de jugar con el fuego de la mayoría africana hasta la rebelión de los ex militares de 1919.

Saben, queridos, hay historia y hay poder. En África, antes de que nuestro pueblo fuera conquistado y esclavizado, hubo una institución humana llamada GRIOT. El GRIOT era un hombre africano (y supongo que también había mujeres) cuya mente era tan excepcional que podía memorizar y recitar historia que abarcaba siglos. En África, entonces, no había necesidad de historia impresa. Las instituciones humanas preservaron la historia, oralmente.

En Belize hoy, debido a las realidades del poder, es indispensable que los nativos conservemos nuestras historias en blanco y negro. Eso se debe a que los oligarcas son dueños de los medios de comunicación y controlan las escuelas. Déjenme darles un ejemplo. Nadie en los medios de comunicación ni en el sistema educativo ha comentado nunca el hecho de que el Consejo Nacional Criollo (NKC en inglés) y la Fundación Educativa UBAD se organizaron en el mismo año - 1996. Eso es porque hay una población negra en Honduras que es criolla. Cuando la Organización Negra Centroamericana (ONECA) estaba siendo organizada en 1996 por líderes garífunas de Honduras y Belize, los criollos en Honduras exigieron que los criollos en Belize estuvieran representados en la nueva ONECA. Y ahí radica una historia que los medios de comunicación propiedad de los oligarcas en Belize no quieren que se cuente. Háblame, Silvana. Háblame de Texas.

Hubo negros en Belize que boicotearon la única cumbre negra celebrada en Belize, en septiembre de 2003. Hoy, la pregunta es: ¿cuántos negros quedan en Belize? Ésta es la cuestión que, en última instancia, se convierte en el meollo del asunto cuando hablamos de amnistía.

¡Poder al pueblo!



by Rudolph A. Neal

## 2021: Weighed In The Balance And Found Wanting

of Covid-19. Marred by a deadly and highly contagious Delta variant, the country soon found itself facing a deadly third wave of the virus. Infection rates soared, propelling a dangerously high hospitalization rate which in turn contributed to many more souls being lost to this virus. Contrary to how the pundits may spin it, the third wave of the Covid-19 virus in Belize was poorly and perfunctorily handled. Infections, hospitalizations and the death toll rose steadily during that wave. And the little and ineffective measures that were enacted to stem the spread of the virus yielded little to no results, and we simply had to ride it out the best way we knew how.

On the matter of the economy, admittedly, even myself was stunned. Economically, the country performed fairly well. All things considered, one would expect no less, given the well-learned and astute economic czar that sits high in the Ministry of Finance. If nothing else, the country's economic state improved significantly this year, but we are still plagued by economic ails. Teachers and public servants who, when combined, equate to a large chunk of the employment pool, are still feeling the pinch. That 10% salary reduction coupled with the increment freeze is contributing to the economic bounce-back of the country, but the proletariats of the country are taking a lick! The meager \$100 Christmas bonus barely afforded them a decent Christmas dinner, and

it was a blue, blue Christmas as the masses continue to suffer.

On the employment front, with more lax restrictions and a gradual return of tourism, unemployment has been slowly trending downwards. That, however, doesn't negate the fact that many thousands of people are still without work and many thousands more are grappling with underemployment and reduced salaries and wages. Poverty continues to plague us this year, and thousands of families are still going to bed hungry and lacking the basic supplies and necessities for their sustenance and survival. Yes, as a country, the economy improved. But the masses of the people who were flung into the poverty pool continue to wallow in indigence and penury! Destitution has plagued us, and this year, poverty remains a real issue as many remain below the fighting line and many more are at risk of falling under.

Despite a protracted curfew and quarantine orders as a result of the pandemic, crime and violence continued to plague us this year and have rocked us to our core. This year saw an alarming number of murders and heinous acts of violence. Crimes perpetrated against our youths and young people this year were astounding, and the severity of the violence was disheartening. Law enforcement struggled to keep up and avert a lot of these major crimes and, despite having the curfew to

their advantage, crime and violence continued unabated in 2021. Conviction rates remain disproportionately low, and although many more boots were just added on the ground for the Police Department, these persons still require requisite training and appropriate crime-fighting materials and tools, coupled with the necessary skills and aptitude to get a hold of crime in Belize.

Overall, this year 2021 has been a hard and challenging year. Many thousands of people struggled to find work. Many thousands more are working but are struggling to make ends meet as a result of being underemployed or being placed on a reduced salary. Poverty continues to plague us and thousands of families are struggling to even put food on the table while thousands more too often go to bed without. Our nation's children are still out of school and the pedagogical gap is being disproportionately widened. Many people were infected with and affected by Covid-19; some of whom even lost their lives. Crime and violence continue to plague us, and our country lacks the very rudimentary thing that can unify us: love. When put all together, all things considered, this year, 2021, was weighed in the balance and found wanting.

Unchained Reflections Of A Liberal Pragmatist.

## Enforcing Road Traffic and School Safety

The risk of dying in a road traffic accident is more than three times greater in low-income countries like Belize than in high-income countries in North America or Europe. Road traffic accidents are a major cause of death among all age groups; it is also the leading cause of death for children and young adults between five and twenty-nine years old. That's according to statistics released by the World Health Organization in 2018. WHO also reports that approximately 1.3 million people perish in RTAs and another twenty to fifty million are injured annually. In Belize, during that same period, eighty-five persons died from injuries sustained during road traffic accidents. What this highlights is an urgent need for enforcement of road traffic safety, the methods, and measures used to prevent road users from being killed or seriously injured.

Well-enforced road safety laws can prevent injuries and loss of lives. The five main behaviors most likely to result in road traffic injuries are speeding, drinking and driving, and failure to use seatbelts, child restraints, and motorcycle helmets. When establishing new legislation or amending existing ones, the Government of Belize should consider evidence based on best practices. Laws that do not meet best practices are less likely to have an impact on road traffic



fatalities or change the behavior of drivers and passengers. Road design, improved vehicle standards, as well as better emergency response and care, also save many lives.

The risky behaviors that are associated with RTAs evolve as society changes. The reality is that more drivers are speeding, more drivers are also drinking and not wearing seatbelts. Road safety laws need to be revised and adapted to address emerging risks, including the use of mobile devices while driving. Telephone use while driving, whether hand-held or hands-free, increases the risk of a collision by four times. Texting, on the other hand, increases the risk by approximately twenty-three times. According to the World Health Organization, the reaction of drivers using a telephone is fifty percent

slower. When motorists can be stopped and ticketed for violating drinking and driving, seatbelt, or other laws independently of committing another offense, primary enforcement can make policing more effective. Building public trust and support is also important. There are several existing mass media campaigns, including the Belize Road Safety Initiative, that have been effective in confidence-building. As part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, there is a target to minimize road traffic fatalities and injuries by fifty percent.

Education about road safety can be aimed at children and adults. It can also be delivered in many contexts, including school curriculums and workplaces. Children attending kindergarten or pre-school should be

taught road safety education, which can continue through to the end of high school. These topics can range from young children being taught about holding a parent's hand when they are crossing the street, to older children learning about wearing bicycle helmets and teenagers being taught about safe driving. One such initiative was undertaken by Phillip "Fawda" Henry a few years ago. He was subsequently able to take his road safety awareness program to primary schools across the country. In this light, school staff and parents should equally lead by example and avoid engaging in unsafe practices that students could emulate. In urban and rural communities, students should be introduced to infrastructures such as road signs and pedestrian crossings. Supervision must also be provided around the school to protect students. It is important to assess any road safety education program to determine its effectiveness and whether the program is having a positive effect or can be improved in any way.

Enforcing traffic laws do have benefits. They improve compliance, which reduces road traffic fatalities, injuries, and related socio-economic costs. Similarly, road safety education creates awareness of existing traffic laws and the proper usage of our carriageways.

# REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

## South Africa parliament fire flares up again



**Burning South African Parliament**

CAPE TOWN, South African, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022 (BBC)

A devastating fire that swept through South Africa's Houses of Parliament in Cape Town has reignited - hours after it was said to be under control.

Flames have been billowing from the building's roof. Firefighters are at the scene, trying to douse the blaze.

The fire first broke out on Sunday, totally destroying the National

Assembly, or lower chamber.

Police have arrested a suspect who will appear in court on Tuesday on charges of arson, housebreaking and theft.

Authorities had warned that flare-ups would be possible because of carpets and wooden floors in the building.

"The void beneath the roof sheeting of the National Assembly is on fire," city officials said.

On Sunday, President Cyril Ramaphosa called the fire a "terrible and devastating event".

He said the building's sprinkler system had not functioned properly, and praised firefighters for responding to the fire in minutes.

The parliament is not currently in session because of the holidays, and no-one was injured.

Government minister Patricia de Lille said Sunday's fire had led to the "complete burning down" of the National Assembly chamber.

CCTV cameras were not being monitored at the time the fire started on Sunday, she said.

Other areas of the parliamentary complex - parts of which date back to 1884 - were also badly damaged.

Ms De Lille said it was still too hot for people to go inside the building to check the extent of the damage, but a drone was being used to "assess the structure of the building until the temperatures can cool down".

The building is home to thousands of treasures including historic books, photographs and important works of art.

There is particular concern that the valuable Keiskamma Tapestry, which

is 120m (394ft) long and documents South Africa's history, may have been damaged or destroyed.

The Houses of Parliament in Cape Town are made up of three sections, with the oldest dating back to 1884. The newer sections built in the 1920s and 1980s house the National Assembly. The government is based in Pretoria.

Mr Ramaphosa on Sunday spoke of his sadness at "this destruction of the home of our democracy".

Parliament said "all efforts" would be made to limit any disruption to its work.

Cape Town Mayor Geordin Hill-Lewis said the city's Council Chamber would be made available as an alternative place for parliament to meet.

It was the second fire at the parliament in under a year. In March there was a fire caused by an electrical fault.

Last year, a fire ravaged part of the University of Cape Town's library, which was home to a unique collection of African archives.

*First published by BBC news.*

## Iran's Raisi says Trump must face justice for Soleimani killing

TEHRAN, Iran, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022 (Aljazeera)

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi has said former United States President Donald Trump must face justice for his role in the assassination of top general Qassem Soleimani two years ago, or else Iran will have revenge.

In a televised speech on Monday, the Iranian president said as the "main criminal and killer" who ordered the deadly drone attack on Soleimani's convoy in Iraq, Trump must face "God's ruling" and suffer "qisas", which is the Islamic term for retaliation in kind.

Raisi called for the formation of a

"fair court" in which Trump, former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and other American officials are sentenced and punished.

If not, he said, "don't doubt, and I tell this to all American statesmen, that the hand of revenge will come out of the ummah's [nation's] sleeve".

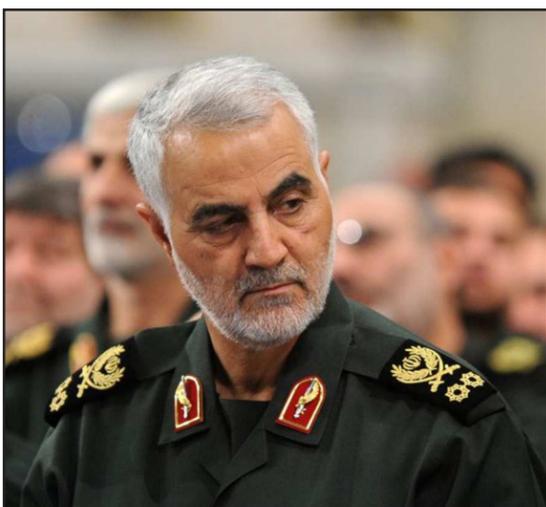
Iran has said Soleimani, one of the most powerful figures in the country at the time, was on a diplomatic mission in Baghdad by invitation of the Iraqi government when the US targeted him near the city's airport.

At the time, Iran promised "harsh revenge" and days later fired more than a dozen missiles at two US bases in Iraq that caused no casualties. The country later set the complete withdrawal of American military forces from the region as its ultimate goal as it pledged revenge for the killing.

Meanwhile, judiciary officials have promised to continue following up on the assassination in local and international venues. The country had previously requested Interpol "red notices" for the arrest of Trump and dozens of other US officials.



**Ebrahim Raisi- President of Iran**



**Qassem Soleimani**

A local court was set up on Monday, and officials have invited the Iranian public to formally register any grievances they may have with foreign powers for assassinating the general.

Iran has also called on the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council to issue resolutions against the US and Israel - which Iranian officials have accused of

providing assistance for the drone attack - to condemn them and discourage similar attacks in the future.

Full article can be view at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/3/irans-raisi-says-trump-must-face-justice-for-soleimanis-assassination>

*First published by Aljazeera*

**AMANDALA is cream!**

# Cattouse Connection sweep Krem New Year's Classic

Continued from Page 1

ideal, and when combined with the fifteen to twenty miles per hour head wind along the journey, it is not surprising that all three races – the Females, Juniors and Elite – were way off the records. Nevertheless, it was a hugely successful day for the C-Ray Cycling Club, who claimed the Female and the Junior championships, while family member Brandon Cattouse, riding in the Elite Category with the 501 Valvoline Cycling Team, was first to cruise past the finish line in camaraderie with teammate Derrick Chavarria.

The Females and Juniors rode only the 52 miles from the Town Hall in Orange Walk Town, while the big Elite race began at the Santa Elena border for the 96-mile journey through Orange Walk Town, all three races ending in Belize City at the finish line on Central American Boulevard near the Santos Diaz store. The Elites took off just after 9:00 a.m. from the Corozal border, while the Juniors started at 9:30 a.m. followed by the Females at 9:35 a.m. from the Orange Walk Town Hall.

## FEMALES

Only three females started (defending 6-time champion Alicia Thompson sat out this one), and it quickly became a case of the C-Ray duo of Elite Female, Kaya Cattouse and Junior Female, Gabrielle Gabourel essentially “double-benking” the sole Female rider for the Chavarria/Western Spirits Cycling Team, U23 Female Paulita Chavarria, who must be given credit for completing the journey despite gaining no station prizes. There was no finishing sprint as Kaya and Gabrielle coasted down the Belcan Bridge towards the finish line, Kaya holding back as Gabrielle crossed the line to become the youngest ever Female Krem New Year’s Day Cycling Classic champion at sixteen years of age.

**Female Category results:** 1st Place – Gabrielle Gabourel (C-Ray Cycling Team, 03:04:58); 2nd - Kaya Cattouse (C-Ray Cycling Team, 03:04:58); and 3rd - Paulita Chavarria (Chavarria/ Western Spirits Cycling Team, 03:38:59). [Record Holder: Alicia Thompson, 02:43:30, Mon. Jan. 1, 2018]

## JUNIORS

A small field of nine juniors started, and only six of them completed the arduous journey to the boulevard in Belize City. What was most interesting about this race, is that the duo of Renan Codd (G-Flow Cycling Team) and Goran Gabourel (C-Ray Cycling Team) dominated all the way, with Codd taking all the station prizes up to the Smart Headquarters in Belize City, after which Gabourel asserted himself, grabbing the station prize at the 1st Roundabout, and taking the other two also at the Overpass and Belcan Bridge, then easily overpowering Codd in his ride to the finish for the Junior Krem Classic championship.

**Junior Category results:** 1st Place

– Goran Gabourel (C-Ray Cycling, 03:02:18); 2nd – Renan Codd (G-Flow Cycling, 03:02:18); 3rd – Tyler Tejada (Chavarria/Western Spirits, 03:10:32); 4th – Richard Rosado (Chavarria/Western Spirits, 03:10:34); 5th – Elwin Humes (Unattached, 03:10:37); and 6th – Jamar Murry (G-Flow, 03:21:37). [Record Holder: Daniel Choto, 02:18:55, Fri. Jan. 1, 2010]

## ELITES

Some 51 Elite cyclists lined up and took off from the Santa Elena border with intention to battle the blistering southeaster for 96 miles, all the way through Orange Walk Town and onwards to the finish line on Central American Boulevard in Belize City. Only 34 of those riders managed to complete the journey; and in the stamina testing last ten miles into the headwind towards Belize City, perennial powerhouse now Masters, Brandon Cattouse left the peloton in his wake as he joined his 501 Valvoline Cycling teammate Derrick Chavarria, who had separated himself from the pack after taking the station prize at the Airport Junction and was on a solo journey to Belize City. Brandon had already done it all for his team in this race, grabbing 3 of the 6 big \$1,000.00 station prizes - at Shell One Stop in Orange Walk Town, at the Digi Tower at Mile 34, and at the National Concrete Products Compound at Mile 11, while also picking up two \$500.00 prizes – in Corozal Town and at Eagle JEM Estate around Mile 15. Up to that point in the race, Brandon’s young teammate, U23 Derrick Chavarria had not contested any station prizes, while other cyclists, including Jyven Gonzalez (G-Flow), Eric Trapp (Westrac Cycling), Angel Tzib (Westrac), and Sherwin Roca (FAL Cycling) all had their turn battling for and claiming station prizes along the journey. So, after Brandon had “wasted” the pack in his Mile 11 grasp of that \$1,000.00 prize, it was a weakened peloton that saw Derrick Chavarria break away at the Airport Junction, and nobody could catch him; none except his “Big Dog” teammate, the now veteran Masters 35+, Brandon Cattouse, who up to that point had never won one of the major Classics in Belize. But in a demonstration of true team spirit and respect for his team general, young Derrick Chavarria, who has a great future in the sport, made the magnanimous move of stalling as teammate Brandon Cattouse crossed the finish line for his first Krem New Year’s Classic championship. There was no sprint, but cycling aficionados understood the meaning of the moment, when the pair coasted down the Belcan with hands joined in the air, as they rode the last couple hundred meters to the finish line.

**Elite Category results:** Champion – Brandon Cattouse (501 Valvoline Cycling Team, 04:19:44); 2nd – Derrick Chavarria (501 Valvoline, 04:19:44); 3rd – Jyven Gonzalez (G-Flow, 04:19:54); 4th Sherwin Roca (FAL Cycling Team, 04:21:29); 5th

Eric Trapp (Westrac Alliance, 04:22:10); 6th Angel Tzib (Westrac Alliance, 04:24:16); 7th Giovanni Lovell (G-Flow, 04:26:11); 8th Joshua Fuller (501 Valvoline, same time – s.t.); 9th Oscar Quiros, Jr. (501 Valvoline, s.t.); 10th Wasani Castro (Westrac Alliance, s.t.); 11th Byron Pope (Westrac Alliance, s.t.); 12th Gregory Lovell (Team Cycology, s.t.); 13th Roque Matus (M&M Engineering, s.t.); 14th Jafari Castro (Westrac Alliance, s.t.); 15th Joslyn Chavarria, Jr. (501 Valvoline, s.t.); 16th Dwight Lopez (Team Cycology, s.t.); 17th Sherwin Requeña (Unattached, s.t.); 18th Shawn Codd (G-Flow, s.t.); 19th Vallan Symns (Kulture, s.t.); 20th Kevin Gentle (Team Cycology, s.t.); 21st Gian Lino (G-Flow, s.t.); 22nd Renan Matus (M&M Engineering, s.t.); 23rd Kenroy Gladden (Kulture, 04:26:18); 24th Richard Santiago (FAL Cycling, s.t.); 25th Sherwin Budna (Team Cycology, 04:26:28); 26th Carroll Azueta (M&M Engineering, 04:26:41); 27th Ryan Willoughby (M&M Engineering, 04:26:47); 28th George Abraham, Jr. (Unattached,

04:27:14); 29th Tariq Cano (04:34:02); 30th Sydney Belezair (s.t.); 31st Darien Anderson (Unattached, s.t.); 32nd Michael Wagner, Sr. (M&M Engineering, 05:17:59); 33rd Willie Chan (M&M Engineering, 05:19:15); and 34th Dorsey Leslie (Unattached, 06:45:43). [Record Holder: Marlon Castillo, 03:29:55, Thurs. Jan. 1, 2009]

## MASTERS

Finishing prizes were also awarded for the Masters and Masters Cat 4/5 categories as follows:

**Masters:** 1st Place – Brandon Cattouse (501 Valvoline); 2nd Gregory Lovell (Team Cycology); 3rd Roque Matus (M&M Engineering).

**Masters Cat 4/5:** 1st Place – Roque Matus (M&M Eng.); 2nd Vallan Symns (Kulture); 3rd Ryan Willoughby (M&M Eng.).

(See full prize lists – finishing and station prizes – in *Amandala* ad pages.)

Congratulations to all the winners, and all who completed the tough journey! Happy New Year to all!!



Masters 4&5 Winners



Master 35+ Winners



Junior Males Winners



Females Winners

## E&B Commission applies to strike out redistricting case

Continued from Page 1

application for the Supreme Court to strike out the redistricting case and has presented two reasons for the application.

According to the BPM release, those two reasons presented by Sabido, on behalf of the commission, are “1. That the claimant had failed to file Witness statements when required to do so and that 2. The Election and Boundaries Commission has set up the administrative machinery to carry out the redistricting exercise and made an estimate of the funds required.”

Recently, the Government of Belize opted to set into motion the initial phase of a purported redistricting exercise, and the Minister responsible for the Public Service, Hon. Henry Usher, has publicly stated that it is pointless for the BPM to continue to pursue the case, since the Elections and Boundaries Commission has already begun a comprehensive review of the electoral divisions with a view of completing the work by mid-2023.

Today, BPM representative, Paul Morgan, stated during an interview that while the Elections and Boundaries Commission remains an autonomous body, the move to now set up a body to begin the redistricting process while a case is currently before the court does not satisfy the Belize Peace Movement’s demands.

He said that the witness statements in question were filed late due to a glitch in the court’s online filing

system.

The organization says that the case is hinged on ensuring fair representation for all Belizeans, by ensuring that the electoral divisions are demarcated so that a nearly equal number of constituents is within each of them. While the body set up by the E&B Commission is expected to carry out this task, the Belize Peace Movement feels that the case must be seen through to the end to ensure that the electoral landscape in Belize never becomes this disproportionate again.

Morgan said that the expert report issued as a part of the case and financed by Lord Michael Ashcroft merely serves as guidance that can be used by the commission, but at this point, they are fighting to prevent the case from being thrown out. The release stated that Arthur Saldivar, attorney for the BPM, had noted “several legal precedents amply demonstrating the frivolous nature of the Elections and Boundaries Chairman’s application.”

“The claimants are resolute and steadfast in their assertion that the current listing of electors as defined under Section 6 of the Representation of the Peoples Act contravenes Section 90(1) of the Belize Constitution to the extent that any election held under that Schedule is ultra vires the constitution and therefore null and void. We assert this blight on our democracy has persisted for too long under the administration of both major political parties,” the release states.

## BSCFA and ASR/BSI sign interim agreement

Continued from Page 1

BSI). This agreement, which ends July 31, 2022, will hold the sugar industry intact until a new commercial agreement is formulated and signed by the parties. Chairman of the BSCFA, Andrew Westby told the media that the the April 30 expiry date of the agreement, which had been proposed by the Prime Minister, Hon. John Briceño, had been extended to the date proposed by the association, but reports are that ASR/BSI feel that they were strong-armed into signing the agreement, given the growing unrest outside their gates for over the past week.

On Friday evening, cane farmers began moving their trucks packed with cane from the delivery operations gate. Those cañeros had been using their trucks to block the entrance to the company’s compound for several days. On Thursday they marched to the Prime Minister’s house in Orange Walk and called for his resignation.

For now, the new year starts with a sigh of relief, for both the association and the mill. But three other cane farmers associations have suffered losses due to this impasse in negotiations, although they were not a part of that ongoing process and subsequent standoff between ASR/BSI and BFSCA. The government has reportedly opted to take on the legal liability in connection with any claims taken to the court by those cane farmers or ASR/BSI in connection with losses suffered due to the delay in the start of the season.

Joining the Prime Minister in the

efforts to broker a truce between the parties were other northern area representatives, Florencio Marin, Ramon Cervantes, Ramiro Ramirez, and Agriculture Minister Hon. Jose Mai. The BSCFA chairman told local media that their involvement fast-tracked the process. As previously reported, ASR/BSI has been reluctant to sign an interim agreement that would only prolong an already stretched-out issue. They were in opposition to the August 1, 2022 end date of the interim agreement proposed by the BSCFA, but seemingly backed down from that hardline stance on Friday, which set the stage for the signing of this agreement.

The company publicly expressed its view, however, that the BSCFA’s actions held not only the mill hostage but also the farmers who are members of the association, as well as farmers from the three other associations. The mill has described BSCFA’s blockade as “illegal and damaging.”

The company, in a release issued on December 30, stated, “BSI does not condone the illegal tactics and threats of violence to pressure concessions from the mill. There is no place for such a tactic in a modern sugar industry. This will only damage the credibility of the whole industry, and call in question whether under such a volatile atmosphere it will be safe to operate the mill.”

The release added, “BSI reiterates however that it is disposed to engage constructively in this process provided both sides show good faith.”

The cane farmers’ trucks were not moved from the delivery entrance of the BSI compound until the new agreement was signed. In a post on Facebook following the successful signing of the interim agreement, Prime Minister Briceño stated, “Today, Belize Sugar Industry and the cane farmers of Belize delivered an agreement. This is a win for both sides, the overall sector, and the national economy. With the crop season now set to start both sides will proceed timely to realizing a full agreement amenable to all sides.” Despite this, cane farmers protesting on Friday made much



AstraZeneca (while they must wait for a period of 5 months in the US) and two months after single-dose vaccines like the Johnson & Johnson jab. More information on the vaccines and eligibility for booster shots in Belize can be obtained from Ministry of Health and Wellness staff at any of the vaccination sites located across the country.

more extensive demands. Some cane farmers are asking for a three-year agreement to be signed with the mill.

“We must elect a minister that is not John Briceño. Secondly, we must now go to the Prime Minister’s house. We will go peacefully because, if not today, then the cane farmers will have nothing tomorrow or Monday. Thirdly,

Please turn to Page 15

## Omicron variant is in Belize — MOHW

Continued from Page 1

Belize. The release came shortly after reports of spikes in the number of new COVID-19 cases, particularly in the Belize, Stann Creek and Orange Walk Districts. While genome tests have yet to officially confirm the presence of the Omicron variant in the country, clinical changes in the pattern of these cases, particularly the symptoms being exhibited by infected persons, strongly suggest that it is here.

The symptoms being observed in recent COVID-19 cases seem to be primarily surfacing in the upper respiratory system and include runny nose, nasal congestion, and sore throat alongside mild fever and muscle aches. Several studies have shown that the Omicron variant is less likely to infect and damage the lower respiratory system, which includes the lungs.

The Health Ministry went on to point out that, despite the symptoms of the Omicron variant being mild compared to the Delta variant, a

large increase in cases could still be detrimental to our healthcare system. In fact, the new variant has been found to be highly transmissible. According to the ministry, the sudden rise in cases increased the country’s positivity rate from 2.5 to 16 in just a short period of time.

The press release goes on to state that “the ministry urges the public to continue to follow strict public health and social measures by wearing a properly fitted face mask at all times in public, washing and sanitizing hands regularly, maintaining proper physical distance, and avoiding crowds and enclosed areas.” It also reminds the public that large gatherings are still prohibited and that all bars and nightclubs remain closed.

Reports continue to show that the COVID-19 vaccines are effective at preventing severe clinical symptoms. In some countries, such as the United Kingdom and Israel, persons can receive booster shots three months after the second dose of two-dose vaccines like Pfizer and

# Belize City man killed on New Year's Eve

Continued from Page 1

According to police reports, 33-year-old Akeem Welch was riding his motorcycle sometime around 8:30 p.m. on Friday, December 31, when someone fired shots in his direction. When police arrived at the scene of the shooting around 8:45 p.m., they discovered Welch lying on the ground with an apparent gunshot wound, and his overturned motorcycle was nearby on the street. He was then transported to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead on arrival.

Unconfirmed reports from Welch's family are that he may have been murdered by someone he knew, possibly even a friend. At the time of the shooting, Welch had just left a friend's yard after a night of socializing, and the person suspected of being the triggerman was reportedly standing outside the house in which Welch had been socializing. Police, however, have not yet detained anyone in connection with the incident. Welch, a resident of Belize City, was the last murder victim reported for 2021.

Police have yet to establish a motive for the murder but have stated that their investigation is still underway.

# BSCFA and ASR/BSI sign interim agreement

Continued from Page 14

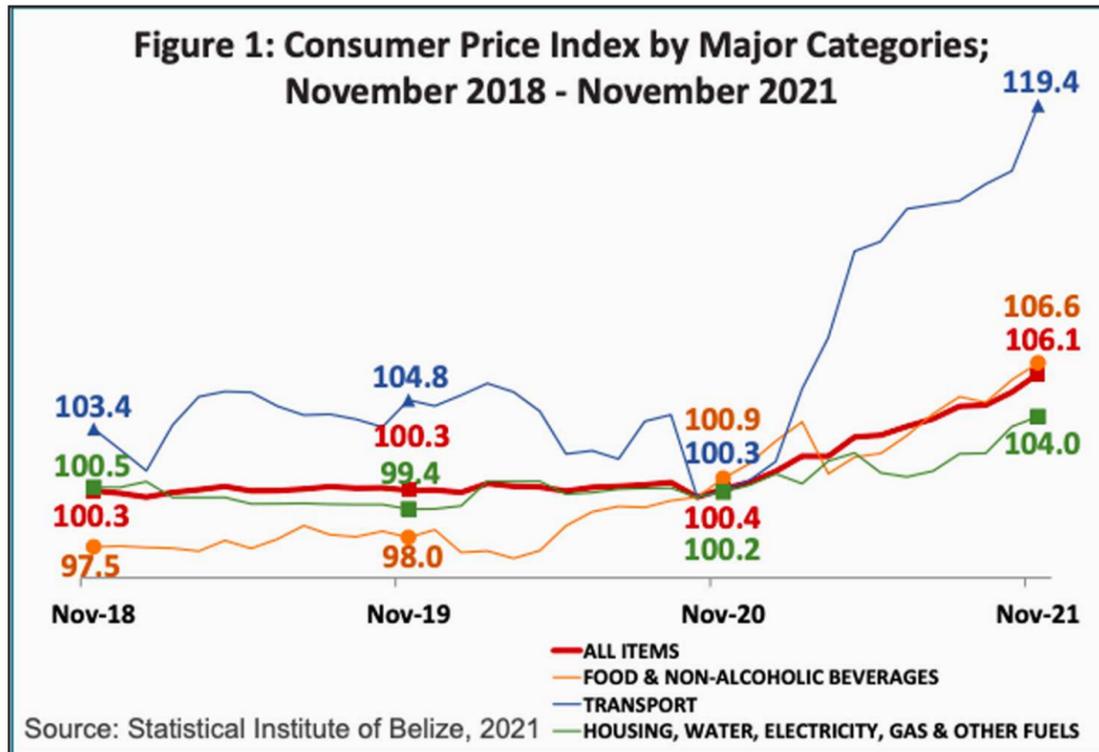
with the permission of our leaders and you all, we are sending a message to the Prime Minister – that we want three more years at BSI without any more delays. We want this in black and white by Monday and if you do not bring the paper to us then you can leave once again." Those were the words, spoken in Spanish, of a cane farmer as he stood before a group of approximately 50 persons who marched to the Prime Minister's house. They had received approval from the Commissioner of Police, Chester Williams, to engage in that procession to Hon. Briceño's home.

Commissioner Williams explained to the media that they have been approaching their policing of this recent sugar protest a bit differently. He cited past gatherings which became more volatile and led to worse outcomes due to police involvement and said that they are exercising their authority responsibly and are trying to strike a balance.

"I must say thanks to the cane farmers and the association for working so good with us," Williams told local media.

# 5.7% inflation recorded in November 2021

SIB records highest monthly inflation rate since August 2008



BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

Last week, the Statistical Institute of Belize released its findings from the monthly Consumer Price Index survey for November 2021. This report recorded the highest monthly overall inflation rate since August 2008: a hike of 5.7% on the cost of goods and services commonly used in Belizean households. The November 2021 CPI report points to increases in the prices of vehicle fuels, food items, and LPG as being some of the drivers that resulted in

the inflation rate. An increase in the prices of household-cleaning items, and restaurant services also contributed to the increase.

A 19% price increase was recorded for those goods and services within the Transport category when compared to November 2020. The sales of Fuels and Lubricants drove the increase within this category due to the substantial increase in the price of vehicle fuel. Diesel saw the highest increase, with its average price per

gallon rising to \$11.94 — an increase of \$3.27 compared to last year's numbers. The price of regular gasoline was up by \$3.14, while premium gas prices rose by \$2.68 on average when compared to last year's numbers.

The price of Food and Non-Alcoholic beverages increased by 5.7% in 2021. Within the food subcategory, an inflation rate of 6.7% was recorded for the month — which is a reflection of the high prices being recorded for basic food items,

the SIB report says. "The most striking increases were recorded for fresh fruits and vegetables, meats, cereal products with notable price change compared to November of last year including pigtails, coconut oil, vegetable oil, pineapples, oranges, sweet peppers, and tomatoes, many of which saw prices rising by 20% or more," the release from the SIB states.

Cost of housing, water, electricity, and LPG rose overall by 3.7% when compared to last year's numbers. Specifically, the average cost of a hundred-pound cylinder of LPG was up by 45.6%, or by \$43.80, from \$96.05 to \$139.85 in November 2021.

Prices in the Restaurants and Accommodation category were also up by 4.7% when compared to last year. An increase of 6.9% in hotel accommodation prices and a rise in restaurant prices by 4.6% drove that increase.

With total inflation of 8.4%, Orange Walk experienced the highest rate of increase in consumer prices for November 2021. Above-average prices in the town for food items, women's clothing, home rental costs, and restaurant services were recorded. Even the cost of haircuts for men was up. San Pedro, on the other hand, recorded the lowest inflation rate, with prices on the island only increasing by 3.6% on average.

# Police officer pistol-whips man at Shisha 8

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 3, 2022

A Belize City man, Edmond Perdomo, reported to police that he was pistol-whipped by a police officer on special duty while he was at Shisha 8 Lounge on Newtown Barracks in Belize City.

Perdomo reportedly got into a verbal disagreement with the police officer, which escalated into a scuffle. According to Perdomo, the officer, who was on special duty, likely acting as a security personnel for the establishment, then proceeded to take out his pistol and hit Perdomo in the face with the weapon.

The officer was later identified as 34-year-old Philip Garbutt. He has since been arrested and charged for wounding. According to the Police Department's Deputy Head of National Crimes Investigation Branch, Senior

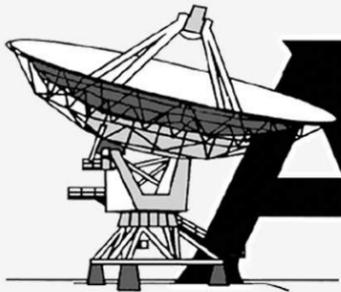


Superintendent, Hilberto Romero, an internal investigation is currently in process, and disciplinary actions will be taken against Garbutt if he is found guilty.

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