

Belize's leading newspaper

Chebat from Health to Public Utilities

Kevin Bernard takes over Health Ministry following PM's cabinet reshuffle



(l-r) Kevin Bernard -- Minister of Health and Wellness, Michel Chebat -- Minister of Public Utilities and Logistics and Rodwell Ferguson -- Minister of Transport, Youth and Sports

BELMOPAN, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022
 Today, the Government of Belize issued a release announcing a significant restructuring of Cabinet portfolios, which included the removal of Hon. Michel Chebat from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, which will now be headed by Hon. Kevin Bernard, a newly elected area

Please turn to ▶ Page 14

Stevedore killed seconds away from home

Daniel Lopez, 24, was killed just moments after being released from police custody



Daniel Lopez, deceased

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

Last night, Daniel Lopez, 24, a stevedore from Belize City, was fatally shot just seconds before arriving home after being released by police, who had detained him during their initial investigation of an inner-city

Please turn to ▶ Page 15

Peyrefitte to PM: show us who got the money

UDP wants details on Blue Bond \$15M payout to advisors; a refusal may lead to legal action

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

Today, the UDP chairman, who is also the Lead Opposition Senator, Michael Peyrefitte, sent a letter to Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño following up on a request for the details on the names of the entities which were paid 15 million dollars for the negotiations and legal maneuvers which culminated in the Blue Bond deal. Reports are that the advisors who spearheaded the process that led to



Michael Peyrefitte

Please turn to ▶ Page 14

PUC's response to BEL

PUC says BEL should have considered Climate Change in their projections

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

In the next 10 days, consumers will know whether they will be saddled with higher electricity rates following a review by the Public Utilities Commission of a possible increase of the Mean



Ernesto Gomez

Please turn to ▶ Page 15

Schools finally reopen

by Khaila Gentle

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

A large number of schools across the country reopened today for a blend of in-person and online classes, also being referred to as "hybrid learning". What many had been wondering in the days leading up to the long-delayed reopening was how well hybrid learning would fare



Principals Karen Canto of EP Yorke and Indira Bowden of Belmopan Methodist High School

Please turn to ▶ Page 14

CSCPA in turmoil

(See Story on page 13)

UDP says Education Ministry is too indecisive

A recent press release from the party expresses support for in-class learning but scolds MOE for poor planning and neglect of government schools

by *Khaila Gentle*

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 7, 2022

In the midst of public concern about the reopening of schools and uncertainty within the community about whether in-person classes would indeed commence on the date scheduled by the Education Ministry, the United Democratic Party issued a press release on Friday, expressing its disappointment in what it calls the Ministry of Education's indecisiveness. In the press release, the UDP points out that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Technology (MoECST) has changed the date for reopening of schools three times in the past four months. In addition to chiding the ministry for this, the party also stated that the Education Ministry has failed to create a realistic timeline for a safe reopening and instead has rushed its plans.

"The Omicron variant in most countries has education officials revisiting their guidance and protocols to schools. This is not the case with this Ministry of Education. Schools are left with guidelines developed pre-Omicron. Furthermore, the experiences of schools with COVID-19 are expected to be different due to transmissibility, yet the Ministry of Education keeps referring to the past. Our knowledge of Omicron and its impact is sparse. The Ministry of Education should not be so callous, irresponsible to allow schools to reopen without the benefit of the due diligence expected from good leaders," said the press release.

Despite voicing its support for the



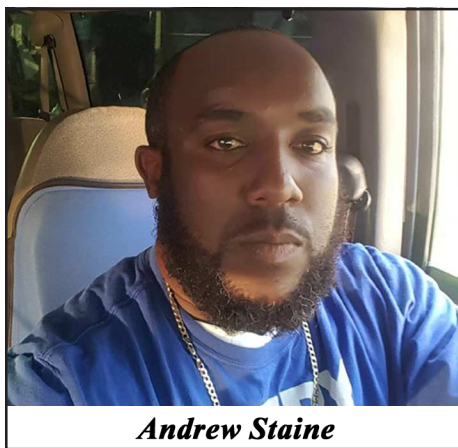
Hon. Patrick Faber

resumption of in-class learning, the UDP stated in the release that the poor timing of reopening will further disenfranchise government schools that "were unable to adequately serve their students during the pandemic because of the lack of support from the government."

The press release then went on to list a set of guidelines that the UDP urges the ministry to consider before reopening. The guidelines include a vaccination rollout for students 5 to 11 years old, provision of masks and other necessary materials to government schools, regulation of class sizes, free testing for teachers and staff, and a sensitization campaign to prepare parents and students for a safe return to school. The UDP ended its press release by urging the ministry to "get serious about the business of educating this nation."

In an interview last week, CEO of the Ministry of Education, Diane Maheia, revealed that over 300 schools from across all levels have been approved for reopening this month. Schools will operate using a hybrid blend of online and on-site learning.

Shooting victim drives himself to KHMH



Andrew Staine

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

On Friday night, around 7:30, a man identified as Andrew Staine, 35, was shot while driving near North Creek. According to police, Staine heard several shots while passing an

area and shortly after, he realized he had been injured. He reportedly drove himself to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KHMH) in his grey Toyota Camry and was subsequently admitted. He is currently in a stable condition.

So far, police have not charged anyone in connection with the shooting. Since Friday night, several persons were detained, however. One of the detained suspects, Daniel Lopez, 24, was gunned down on Fabers Road shortly after being released from police custody. Lopez is not believed to have been the shooter in the Friday night incident.

Staine remains in a stable condition, with a single gunshot wound in his left calf.

US Joint Task Force trains in Ladyville

by *Charles Gladden*

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

From January 7-21, The United States Southern Command (US SOUTHCOM) Joint Task Force-Bravo (JTF BRAVO), a unit stationed on the Soto Cano air base in Honduras, will be conducting the "Keel-Billed Toucan" (KBT) humanitarian and disaster relief exercise in Ladyville.

The US JTF BRAVO routinely trains persons involved in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief missions and is equipped with airlift capabilities that can be used to save lives and reduce suffering in the immediate aftermath of natural disasters. During the airlift portion of the training session, the US Army CH-47 and UH-60 helicopters will be utilized to support flight operations.

"Through this JTF-Bravo disaster response exercise, the United States is demonstrating its commitment to the safety and security of the Belizean people. It is a testament to our strong security ties, as well as the longstanding friendship between our

two countries and our commitment to assist Belize in disaster preparation and response," said the US Chargé d'Affairs, Leyla Moses.

The US SOUTHCOM will be represented by JTF-Bravo Commander, Colonel Steven Gventer, who will be leading the exercise. "Joint Task Force-Bravo is uniquely positioned and highly capable of providing quick, effective assistance to local communities throughout the region during times of need. Exercises like 'Keel-Billed Toucan' enable the US government to drill for a real-life event so that we may sharpen necessary skills to assist our friends in Belize," noted Colonel Gventer.

Keel-Billed Toucan Training Exercise Distinguished Visitors' Day was scheduled for Thursday, January 13, 2022. However, due to the high number of cases of the COVID-19 Omicron variant, the engagement has been canceled.

An estimated 150 US service members have been deployed from Soto Cano Air Base in support of this assignment.



US SOUTHCOM Joint Task Force-Bravo

Motorcyclist dies in RTA

Josue Elesiar Ramos is believed to have lost control of his motorbike, which crashed into the pavement of the George Price Highway.

CAYO DISTRICT, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

A motorcyclist lost his life in a road traffic accident that took place on Saturday night on the George Price Highway near Cotton Tree Village, in the Cayo District. Josue Ramos was reportedly riding his motorcycle, in the company of a female passenger identified as Elsie Bardalez, around 11:00 o'clock that night when he lost control of the bike while heading toward Belmopan. The motorbike then crashed into the pavement of the highway near Cotton Tree, and Ramos was severely injured in the head and body as a result. He reportedly died on the spot.

His female passenger, Bardalez, received injuries to her knees and wrist and was transported to the Western Regional Hospital. There is



Josue Ramos – deceased

no indication at this time if alcohol played a role in this tragic accident.

Police continue to investigate this incident.

Low voter turnout in Police Association election

by Khaila Gentle

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 7, 2022

At the Police Association elections held last week, only 606 police officers (out of a possible 2400) turned out to vote. The incumbents, Sergeant Jermaine Hyde and his slate, were victorious once more, with Hyde winning by a landslide — with almost 90% of the votes being cast in his favor.

When asked about the low turnout, the president-elect blamed it on COVID-19. “The showing was low, but like I said, that was expected, because a lot of police officers are presently infected with COVID-19, and due to the COVID-19 restrictions some may not have wanted to come out and vote. So that did play a role in terms of the numbers,” said Sergeant Hyde.

When it was suggested that the low turnout might have been a result of the election date being announced late or members of the Police Department losing faith in the association, Hyde quickly dismissed those claims and asserted that the



Sergeant Jermaine Hyde

confidence of the association’s members has not waned.

“They are still confident in this association’s central board to vote us again. They did vote us back another term, so I believe they are confident, and with that confidence maybe we need to build on it, and that is what this central board intends to do: build on the confidence of our members and work for our members and try to provide our best possible service we can in terms on welfare,” he stated.

Hyde and his slate have promised to allocate funds that will be used to offer financial assistance to officers in need and to provide land to police officers. They will be serving a 1-year term.

Car collides with James Bus; 1 dead

Mario Rivero was reportedly pinned onto the seat of his white Chevy Tracker after it collided with a James Bus

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

Around 6:10 last night, a man lost his life when the vehicle he was driving crashed into a James Bus between Miles 19 and 20 on the George Price Highway, in the general vicinity of Hattieville Village. When police went to the scene, they found Mario Rivero pinned to his white Chevy Tracker, and the James Bus was seen on the side of the road. They called on the personnel from the Ladyville Fire Department to extract Rivero from the vehicle using the “jaws of life” tool. He was then transported to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, and pronounced dead shortly after.

The driver of the bus, Eric Neal, told police that Rivero had driven head-on into the bus. He said that he made attempts to swerve in order to avoid the collision but was too late and both vehicles ended up on the left side of the highway. Rivero was reportedly trapped in the vehicle for some time before being taken out.

The James Bus was heading in the direction of Belize City. A police investigation continues.



James Bus on roadside following accident

Belize Coast Guard conducts search operation on Tobacco Caye

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

A high-powered military-grade rifle was discovered during a near 6-hour search on Tobacco Caye last Thursday, January 6. The small island is a popular tourism destination off the coast of Dangriga.

The special search operation was carried out by Coast Guard officers, who found the weapon in a room occupied by Robert Bradley, who was subsequently detained. Along with the rifle, the officers also found thirty-live rounds of 5.56-millimeter military-grade ammunition on the island during the search.

The commando version M-4 carbine was handed over to the Police Department, who will bring charges against Bradley for gun possession.

The Special Operations Unit of the Belize Coast Guard is designed to carry out operations that mirror police’s land-based efforts in Dangriga.

The source of the rifle, and how it came to be in the country and on the small island is not yet known, but the southern waters in Belize



are known to be an area highly trafficked by both domestic and international participants in the narco trade, and military-styled weapons are typically used by these traffickers.

Griga man shot

DANGRIGA, Stann Creek District, Fri. Jan. 7, 2022

About an hour and a half after Joshua Flores, a 15-year-old resident of Dangriga Town who was a promising basketball player, was fatally shot while walking with three purported friends, another resident of Dangriga Town — a 52-year-old man, was killed.

According to police reports, on Wednesday night, January 5, around 10:00, Bartholomew Anthony

Ramirez, 52, a self-employed Dangriga resident, was standing with another individual on Banak Street, in the Back-a-town area, when an unknown gunman rode by on a bicycle and fired several shots, hitting Ramirez in his body. Ramirez was transported to the Southern Regional Hospital, where he is listed in a stable condition.

According to residents of the town, Ramirez may not have been the intended target.

Skeletal remains found

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 7, 2022

Human skeletal remains that were discovered on Thursday, January 6, behind the Port of Belize Limited are currently at the National Forensic Sciences Services lab, where they will undergo a post-mortem examination. According to reports, the remains were found about 150 feet from the seaside. Lying nearby were a black beach cruiser and a white bucket.

The remains have not yet been

identified, but it must be noted that the area is known to be a location used for shallow grave burials. Criminal elements in the Jane Usher area often carry out illegal activities in the poorly lit area, which is almost never trafficked by police. The location is also a very well-known fishing spot in Belize City.

The discovery of the remains was made by a fisherman in the area around 3:00 p.m. on Thursday. He then contacted the authorities.

Elderly man run over and left for dead



Caryl Smith

vehicle was already long gone. Smith was placed in an induced coma on Wednesday night due to his severe head injuries, but woke up the following morning. He was later taken to the Belize Medical Associates for a CT scan. Members of his family are hoping for a full recovery, but have said that the driver of the vehicle which hit him must be held accountable.

Reports are that the family was celebrating the birthday of a child in the family when they received a call from another close family member who notified them of what had occurred. The family does not know who hit Smith but believe that surveillance footage recorded by a camera of a Chinese grocery store near the location could reveal what took place on the night of the accident.

They are also asking any eyewitnesses of the incident to come forward with any information they may have that could lead to an arrest of the person responsible for this hit-and-run.

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

An elderly man is recovering from serious injuries after being run over and left for dead in Sandhill on Wednesday night. Caryl Smith, 61, the hit-and-run victim, lay on the road until the occupants of a bus traveling from Belize City to Sandhill noticed him lying in a pool of blood. They rendered aid and called the police, but by that time, the driver of the

ACP Rosado is new DCP

ACP Rosado fills the vacancy left by former DCP, career-cop Edward Broaster

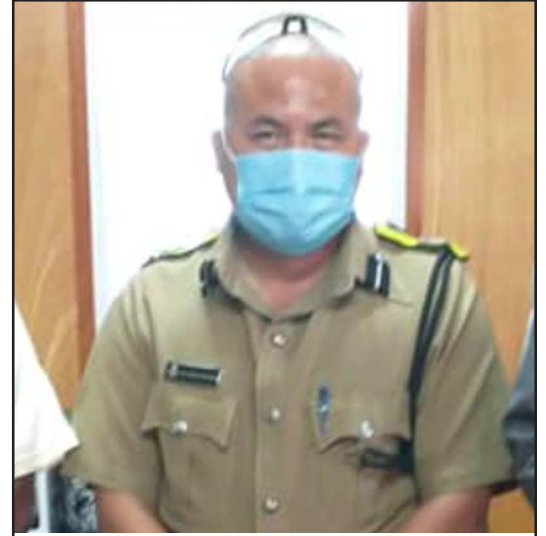
BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 10, 2022

Today, the Commissioner of Police, Chester Williams shared a press release issued by the Police Department announcing the recommendation for ACP Dr. Anthony Rosado to become the new Deputy Commissioner of Police. The role has been vacant since the retirement of ACP Edward Broaster but today the COMPOL gave his choice to the Security Services Commission.

ACP Rosado is set to fill the vacancy immediately, having responsibility for Operations and Crime control.

Rosado was made the Officer Commanding the Eastern Division, the largest formation, back in August of 2020. He is now headed to a new office in Belmopan, to assume a new role in command.

The release from the police department states, "It is anticipated that this move will enhance our



ACP Dr. Anthony Rosado

Department's operational efficiency in combating crime and violence across the country."

ACP Rosado holds a Ph.D. in Business Administration, with his dissertation focus on managing change in Law Enforcement organizations in the Caribbean.

Year in Review 2021 – Part 2

Continued from page 34 of the Friday January 7, 2022 issue #3520 of the Amandala

During the House of Representatives meeting at which the 2021/2022 budget was presented, the Opposition members walked out after Cayo South area representative, Hon. Julius Espot, told the Leader of the Opposition, Patrick Faber, to "sit down, boy". Faber demanded an apology for what he deemed as unparliamentary language, but none was forthcoming. The Speaker of the House, Hon. Valerie Woods, did ask for the statement to be struck from the record, but the Opposition considered that insufficient.

While Espot was on the Speaker's radar for his seemingly uncontrollable outbursts, outside, Prime Minister John Briceño was placed on the hot seat by the media about millions in GST owed by SMART, a company partially owned by members of his family. A leaked letter to his sister, Vanessa Briceño, referenced some \$11.1 million owed. Briceño said the amount was miscalculated and that his sister, the registered taxpayer, was trying to get the issue resolved for years.

On the environmental front, a letter dated April 9, 2021 from the Chief Environmental Officer, Martin Alegria to Portico Enterprise Ltd. green-lighting the construction and operation of Port of Magical Belize raised concern for conservation NGOs, which condemned the government's lack of a sustainable cruise port policy.

A heat-wave-induced stroke was said to be the cause of death of 15,000 chickens on the weekend of April 10. The dead birds were improperly dumped on the roadside in Spanish Lookout because the gate to the dumpsite was locked. Stakeholders in the poultry industry blamed that mass death on inadequate preparation to deal

with annual heat stress.

In partnership with the Caribbean Agency for Justice Solutions, the Belize



court system entered another era with the introduction of electronic filing through "Folio E-Filing," launched on April 26.

One case that had recently concluded before the courts stemmed from a failed land compensation deal. The claimant, Olivia Villanueva, then took the UDP administration to court. Two days ahead of the 2008 general election, Villanueva was sold 102.5 acres of Turneffe Island Range for a paltry sum of \$27,300, and the Supreme Court ruled that Villanueva should be paid \$5.6 million.

Friday, April 30, was the last work day for Belize's second Governor

General, Sir Colville Young, who entered retirement. Froyla Tz'alam was named shortly after as Belize's 3rd Governor General.

We started off May 2021 with tense relations between the media and the joint unions after the Public Service Union issued a release announcing it would boycott some media houses that aired paid political ads which it said amounted to a smear campaign against their leadership. The BNTU president called it union-busting on the part of the Briceño administration.

Our top story for the mid-week edition on May 12 was, "Abusive



relationship ends in fatal arson." Another, 36-year-old Kendra Middleton, and her 3-year-old son both perished inside their St. Matthews home when her ex-common-law husband, Demas Mendez, set her home

on fire.

On May 11, it was announced that Dr. Carla Barnett had been selected to be the secretary general of CARICOM — becoming the first woman and Belizean to serve in the post.



Among this year's victims of COVID-19 was Belize football legend Charles Hogan, who lost a battle with the dreaded illness after two weeks in May in California.

A narco jet landing in Blue Creek on May 13 made it to the headlines. Air asset surveillance footage revealed that upon landing, the executive jet was swarmed by at least 60 persons, who unloaded the aircraft's content in record time.

Two days before, Ian Patt, 30, the





Check your compass, Blue Captain

Sun. Jan. 9, 2022

An important piece of equipment for sea goers, especially on long voyages, is a compass, because when a bad storm hits, with heavy showers, visibility could be reduced to near zero, with wind directions changing dramatically for short spells; and even on a short trip, a craft leaving Fort Point for English Caye, for example, could be surprised when the shower suddenly ends and the prevailing winds return, to find that they are in fact heading in the direction of the fabled Waterloo, the current site of Port of Belize.

In the months before the November 11, 2020 general elections in Belize, the mood in some quarters was pretty strong that the red party would be swept out in convincing fashion; but, after a dozen long years of ridicule and abuse in opposition, the blue captain, Hon. John Briceño, was not taking any chances. The Big Blue Machine was coming out with all its forces, firing on all cylinders, and determined to convince any still skeptical Belizean voter that this PUP was the real deal and determined to right the many wrongs the citizenry had endured under the arrogant and corrupted red incumbents.

Meanwhile, with time running out on a failing economy and rampant rumors of corruption, the arrival of Covid-19 in Belize early in general election year 2020, with a state of emergency declared in March, probably worked in favor of the incumbent UDP government, since the eager PUP opposition could not hold any public meetings or demonstrations to energize their followers. This may have caused the PUP to become a bit anxious; they did not know what was in the minds of those tricky "on the fence" Belizean voters, who, as it later turned out, had already made up their minds for a big sweep.

So, the PUP went all out. And what a campaign it was, unveiling in the months preceding the November 11 election date, parts and

pieces of their PlanBelize manifesto, a very well thought out document indeed, which they dramatically launched in a grand opening ceremony a couple weeks before the election.

A lot of work had obviously gone into PlanBelize, and it demonstrated clearly that the PUP think tank had researched and analyzed the major issues that mattered most to the Belizean electorate in these elections. And the major themes that resonated in the language of PlanBelize were the issues of "good governance" and stomping out corruption through enacting legislation along the lines of UNCAC. Growing the economy and all that entails is always a desirable objective, but the general mood of Belizeans seemed to be that if the good governance and corruption issues were adequately addressed, the effect on the economy would be like gas in the tank of a sputtering engine.

With the stormy winds and poor visibility of Covid-19 in early 2020, the incumbent Dean Barrow-led UDP had pretty much "cut its engine" and concentrated on weathering the storm, but still with little effort to right the many wrongs and shortcomings of his motley crew, one of whose picture is still posted on a police wanted bulletin.

Having taken control of government after the November

11, 2020 sweep at the polls, the John Briceño-led PUP government had a good plan, PlanBelize, already in hand, and, Covid or no Covid, they were determined to be guided by their plan to get the country out of its health and economic danger. The stinging rain and strong headwinds of Covid did not deter the PUP craft, and it did not throw them far off course, because they had their compass, PlanBelize, to guide them through the storm.

At the current juncture, with strides having been made in agriculture, the economy surging ahead with tourism picking up some traction, houses being built and land titles distributed, the sugar crisis solved and citrus digging in for a rebound, the Superbond replaced by the quite manageable Blue Bond of the Nature Conservancy, and now the Omicron variant of Covid seeming to be less lethal, although many times more contagious than Delta, there is much cause for optimism in 2022.

Of course, it's far from all good. There are many hungry mouths and many jobless and desperate citizens, and crime and violence rage out of control, but PUP leaders can pat themselves on the back for their early accomplishments. However, they have a lot more to do.

The political seas might now appear much calmer, and the visibility much better for the John Briceño-led PUP government, but the always skeptical non-party-fanatics are presently becoming concerned that perhaps the PUP might now be thinking of discarding their compass, PlanBelize, and forgetting some of the commitments therein that are still considered critical for the sustained progress and development of our nation. Covid may have been an excuse for some delay, but it has now been over a year, and some Belizeans are suspicious about any "lee breeze" that blows right now.

The PUP's PlanBelize, officially launched at a ceremony at the Belize Biltmore Plaza on Thursday, October 22, 2020, was comprised of three main documents: "PUP 10 Steps to Eliminate Corruption," "Good Governance – A Shared Responsibility," and "Six Steps to Make Government More Accountable," which can be viewed on its website at www.pup.org.bz.

It is not our intention to "throw cold water" on the accomplishments so far of this new PUP government under difficult Covid-19 circumstances; but it is our duty to gently remind them that the most critical areas of Belizeans' concern remain to be properly addressed in the areas of "good governance" and "corruption" legislation. Stick to the PlanBelize which got you elected, and you can't go wrong.

Some outstanding items from PlanBelize are the following:

The Integrity Commission must do its job effectively. To do so it should no longer be controlled by the Party in Government. Likewise, we will put in place a mechanism to ensure the financial independence of the Integrity Commission with a budget to be approved by the National Assembly...

Immediately appoint all professional personnel of the Integrity Commission (IC) and provide necessary funding for its Secretariat to fulfill the important legal, auditing and investigative roles free from any undue political influence. The IC will be capacitated to fast track implementation of commitments under the UNCAC agreement...

We will immediately sign, ratify and fully adhere to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), and will access the excellent guidelines, technical assistance and resources provided to signatory...

Take immediate steps to restore the autonomy of the public service (prevent micro management by political directorate)... Revert to having Permanent Secretaries, i.e. using senior career public officers, as accounting officers of the Ministries...

Implement a transparent redistricting exercise, free from any appearance of political manipulation, with the goal being a fair representation of the public...

For fair, effective representation and participation, ensure the independence of the Elections & Boundaries Commission to be free from political interference. Its Chairman is to be appointed in a similar fashion as the DPP and Auditor General, so the EBC can be autonomous and free from government control...

"The moving finger writes." Not our words, Honourable Members — yours.



(estb. 1969)

Business and editorial offices:
3304 Partridge Street, Belize City, Belize, Central America
is printed twice weekly by the Amandala Press.

**Telephones: 501-280-4703/
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Year in Review 2021 – Part 2

Continued from Page 4

nephew of UDP deputy leader Hugo Patt, was among those detained for a drug bust of 63 pounds of marijuana in vehicles they were driving in Ladyville. It was later learned that one vehicle was registered in Hon. Patt's name, and he explained that the vehicle, used to transport cane, was rented out.

In Belize City, the bodies of a couple (Leticia Carillo Frankel and Mark Frankel) who had gone missing earlier in the week were found on Thursday, May 20 off a feeder road along the John Smith Road. It is



believed they were the victims of a burglary that ended in murder.

In Punta Gorda, a paraplegic, 60-year-old Marcus Tracy, was found chopped to death on May 21 in his home, though no sign of forced entry

was observed.

For the first time, a woman, Dian Vasquez, was named Chief Transport Officer. She holds a Master's Degree in Diplomacy and Environmental Management and Development from the Australian National University.

Our headline on Tuesday, May 25, was also transport-related, as motorists across the country engaged in panic buying due to a rumoured fuel shortage that actually precipitated a shortage. Thankfully, it was not prolonged.

The following day, on Thursday, May 26, authorities intercepted two fuel trucks with contraband fuel (6,000 gallons) about 600 yards from the Guatemalan border. A Belizean and a Guatemalan were detained.

One of the legislations demanded by the joint unions, the Protected Disclosures Bill 2021, was presented at a House of Representatives meeting on Friday, May 28. The purpose of the law is to put in place measures to protect whistleblowers from punitive acts against them.



The single incident that attracted the most international press coverage on Belize, at least in recent history, was the killing of Superintendent Henry Jemmott by Jasmine Hartin, 32, the ex-partner of Andrew Ashcroft – son of Michael Ashcroft. The shooting with Jemmott's own police-issued Glock occurred during curfew hours on Friday, May 28. Hartin claimed that Jemmott had been teaching her how to use the gun and it accidentally went off. Both had been socializing on a pier in San Pedro and some cocaine was also found on her person. She was later charged with manslaughter, which was decried by the Jemmott family. Less than two weeks later, she was granted bail of \$30,000. Abandoned by the Ashcroft family, Hartin is now embroiled in a custody battle with Andrew Ashcroft for their young twins.

Also killed on Friday, May 28, was BECOL operations supervisor Wayne Emmanuel, 49. It is believed he was targeted by bandits who wanted to steal his vehicle to take it across the border, something that has become a common crime out west.

May 31st saw the reopening of the



land borders for tourists only. These were closed since March of 2020.

At the beginning of June, Prime Minister John Briceño visited Guatemalan president Alejandro Giammattei. Among matters agreed during the working visit was the reactivation of the institutional

framework of the Partial Scope Trade Agreement and the completion of the implementation of 13 bilateral cooperation agreements signed years before in Placencia.

On June 3, Daniel Ack, 28, a Coast Guard officer, and his common-law wife, Jamie-lee Cruz, 27, were busted with a sizeable amount of uncustomed marine products (320 pounds of bass fillet fish, 46 pounds of salmon fillet, and 317 pounds of jumbo shrimp), for which they were charged.



In political news, a video of Opposition leader Hon. Patrick Faber in the middle of an aggressive outburst against the mother of his 2-year-old daughter in the presence of the child led Mesopotamia area representative, Hon. Moses "Shyne" Barrow, to attempt to remove Faber from that role. In a public post, Barrow said that Faber had lost the confidence of the majority of Opposition members in the House of Representatives. Barrow recommended the Hon. Tracy Taegar-Panton, Albert area rep, as an appropriate replacement but she did not entertain his suggestion. Barrow himself would go on to briefly fill the post near the end of June after securing signatures from the Hon. Hugo Patt and his aunt, the Hon. Denise Barrow, that were placed in a letter submitted to the Governor General.

Beginning on June 14, the work hours for public officers were reduced by 5 hours weekly. This was one of the compensation measures offered by the Government to the joint unions to get them to accept the 10% salary cut.

VACANCY

KREM Television is seeking applications from suitable candidates for the post of REPORTER to be stationed in Belize City.

Requirements:

- Minimum of an Associate Degree in English; a Bachelor's Degree would be a plus
- Excellent command of the English language
- Interested in the news
- Strong interpersonal communication skills
- Disciplined, inquisitive, go-getter and enjoys research
- Willing to work long hours
- Willing to learn
- Works well under pressure and can multitask
- Is a team player

Send your resume with two letters of recommendation to:

Human Resource Manager
KREM Television
3304 Partridge Street
Belize City
Or e-mail to: innadynamics@gmail.com

Deadline for applications is Monday, February 1, 2022.

The great triumph of capitalism

by Colin Hyde

I read that there's a planet out there that is made of diamonds, and the first thought that came to my mind when I read that is what De Beers would do if one of those spaceships got too close to it. The planet, 55 Cancri e, was discovered in 2004 and the website Space.com says that it is composed mainly of carbon, in the form of diamond and graphite, and that at least a "third of the planet's mass is likely pure diamond."

This De Beers, Britannica.com says that in 1871 Cecil Rhodes bought a claim to its diamond mine in southern Africa and, to keep prices high and demand steady, from there he bought up most of the diamond mines in that part of the world. Britannica says that the Great Depression (1930s) depressed prices and forced the closure of a number of mines, and to stimulate prices De Beers hired an advertising company to promote diamonds as a social status thing—and ah, a romance story...and like magic the shiny stone became a girl's best friend.

Aha, you can't keep every good thing to yourself, definitely not all of the time; there were/are challengers,

but they all work in cahoots to keep the money flowing in for that piece of stone.

It isn't likely that anyone will be landing on this 55 Cancri e, at least not soon, but you can bet that De Beers and friends will be on the first spaceship that makes a landing there, or they will have negotiated some favorable accommodation. Let's not be naïve. No De Beers sanction, that deh spaceship plane won't leave the launching pad, even if it carries the flag with the big star and the four little stars, or the one with the gold hammer, sickle, and little star.

There are laws in some places to break up monopolies, but the game I'm after here today is the savvy of the system. The oil of capitalism is the creation of things, anything, and making people want them/it. A famous circus owner once said a sucker is born every minute. Yap, the smartest people getting less smart people to buy things, some of which they don't need, is the juice of this capitalism. My, to make a guy need a glittery stone to prove his love to a girl!

Communism and left-leaning socialism could never pull off such scams...it's crazy, people puling in gobs of cash for singing songs,

playing ball, and acting in movies. Bah, very often these people don't know what to do with the loot. Some get heady. Some male ones only live to buy trinkets to please women, which, you know, dovetails with De Beers scam.

De Beers knows what to do with the loot they collect. Britannica says the company has "interests in explosives manufacturing and chemical manufacturing; in gold, coal, and copper mines; and in (aha) synthetic diamonds." I bet that synthetic diamonds business is to dissuade the space explorers, a little warning shot across their bows, so they can't raise the funds to sponsor the ship. How can you sell a planet made of diamonds if De Beers is going to flood the market with fake ones?

But quién sabe, capitalists can sell anything.

Did Dr. Guerra not run because she lost in 2015?

Dr. Guerra has been in the news recently for not renewing her contract as CEO at the Ministry of Natural Resources and for apparently turning down a similar position at the Ministry of Health & Wellness. Without ever meeting the lady or knowing any of the innards of her life, going only with what has been in public view, the pattern here suggests that she is someone who noh tek two from nobody.

Looking at her resume, she has worked in public health, where she held a number of positions, and then she moved on to Mount Carmel Clinic & Pharmacy in 2010, as head physician. I don't know if she owns or has shares in the clinic; what we all know is that after gaining considerable experience in the medical field she entered the political arena, in Cayo West for the PUP.

In 2015 she was crushed by Erwin Contreras, by nearly 1,300 votes. This was an election which found the PUP still very much divided, and a UDP not only flush with cash because of the Petro Caribe, but also riding high after they cut what then seemed to be a favorable deal with Ashcroft or his friends to settle the BTL nationalization.

It's an intriguing question, why Dr. Guerra didn't contest Cayo West for the PUP in 2020. Looking at the division, it had belonged to Erwin Contreras of the UDP since 1998, by massive margins after he won a squeaker over the PUP's Dr. Amin Hegar in 1998. Erwin sailed through Kendall Mendez in 2003, K Mendez again in 2008, Oscar Sabido in 2012, and Dr. Guerra in 2015. Did she feel she would lose to Erwin again? Did she not feel the powerful winds blowing behind the blue gang last year?

If we judge by the two high-profile

positions she has held/been offered in the new government, Dr. Guerra is in good standing with the leading faction of the ruling party. Really, didn't she want to run again? Was she blocked from running because she lost in 2015? If we joggle our memories just a little, we find that the PUP endorsed Jorge Hegar Espot for Cayo West, in 2020. But Hegar Espot seemed so uninterested in running he hadn't registered to vote. Too many divisions have been won or lost narrowly for a serious candidate not to know that every vote counts.

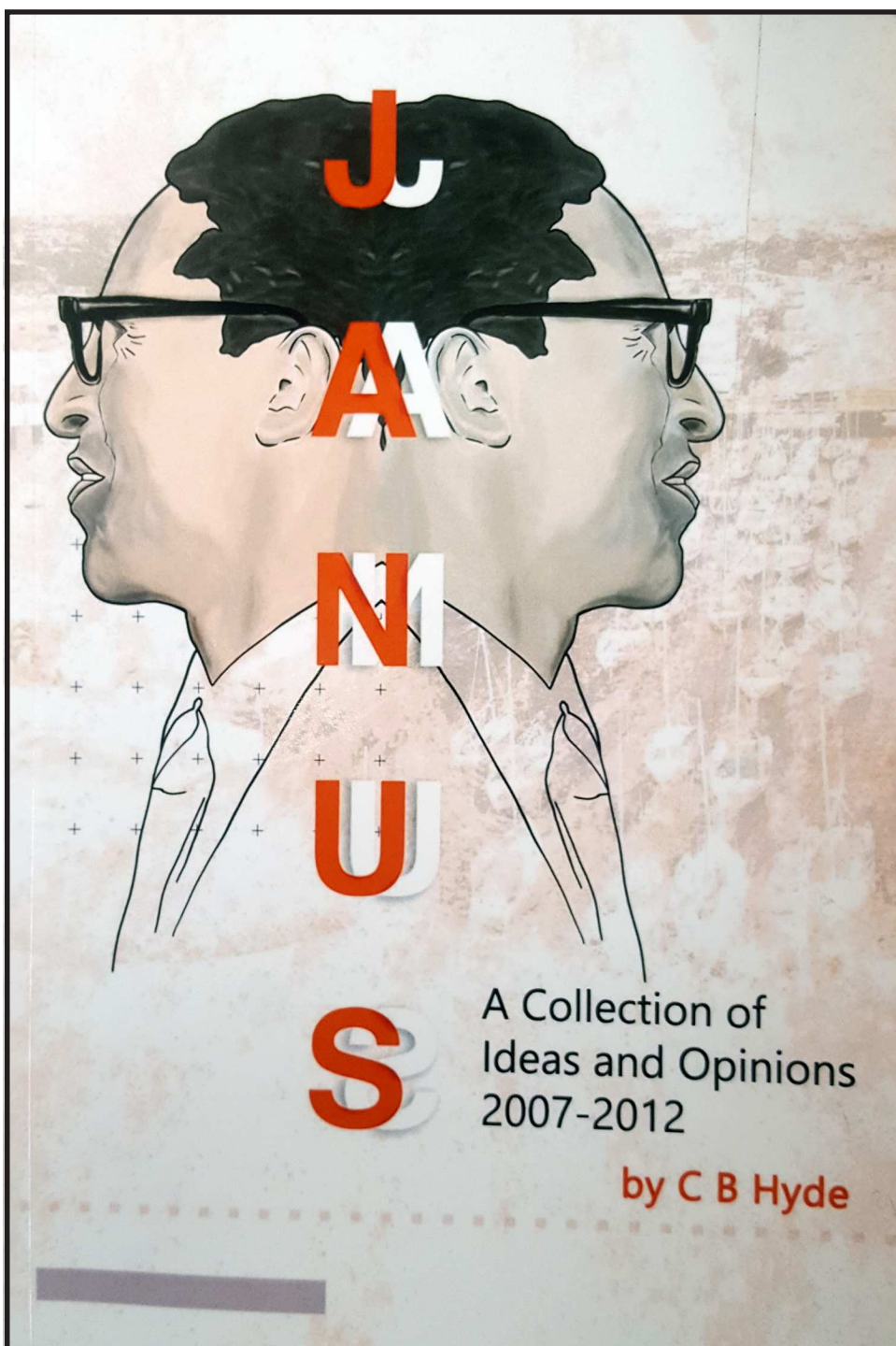
We are told the UDP has a stupid rule that a candidate who has lost at the polls thrice can't run again. Really, serious candidates should stay away from that party when the winds aren't blowing favorably. I've heard the UDP has talked about applying this rule to block John Saldivar from running again, but if they were real it's a lot more substantial for him to apologize for his choice of donors and accept that area representatives must have better judgment than the rest of us.

Kendall Mendez ran and lost twice, but some good candidates lose heart after a single whipping at the polls. Some are satisfied with one bite at the race, and some get smeared as a loser by opportunists in their party. Intrigue, intrigue, I guess that's why people like the politics so much; that's why we want to know Dr. Guerra's story.

In times of Covid, leaders can go back on their word

Every sailor wants to chart a direct course, to bring their ship to port at a time they promised, but if the wind shifts, they have to tack, and if a storm comes up, they have to reef sails. No government likes to change course, because it makes it look weak, indicates that it hasn't done thorough research before making its decisions, but in these extraordinary times in which we are living, because of the virus, the best laid plans can be scuttled overnight.

The virus mutates with incredible speed, and when it does we cannot bury our heads; we have to react based on the knowledge we have. The government had planned to reopen the land borders in January, but changed course when all the expert calculations showed that in January there would be a spike in Covid-19 cases. Hmm, the government had also announced, insisted that schools would reopen in the second week of January. Schools have been shuttered for almost two years, far too long, and no one wants the education of our children and youth to be delayed any further. But the Omicron variant seems to be saying it should be for another two weeks, or four.





Revise su brújula, Capitán Azul

Domingo 9 de enero de 2022

Una pieza importante del equipo para los amantes del mar, especialmente en viajes largos, es una brújula, porque cuando golpea una fuerte tormenta, con fuertes lluvias, la visibilidad puede reducirse a casi cero, y las direcciones del viento cambian drásticamente por breves periodos; e incluso en un viaje corto, una embarcación saliendo de Fort Point hacia Cayo Inglés por ejemplo, podría sorprenderse cuando los chubascos cesan repentinamente y regresan los vientos predominantes, y descubre que, de hecho, se dirige en dirección al legendario Waterloo, el sitio actual de Port of Belize.

En los meses previos a las elecciones generales del 11 de noviembre de 2020 en Belize, el estado de ánimo en algunos sectores era bastante fuerte de que el partido rojo sería barrido fuera de manera convincente; pero, después de una docena de largos años de burlas y abusos en la oposición, el capitán azul, el Honorable John Briceño, no se arriesgaba. La Gran Máquina Azul estaba saliendo con todas sus fuerzas, disparando a toda máquina, y decidida a convencer a cualquier votante beliceño aún escéptico de que este PUP era real y decidido a corregir los muchos errores que la ciudadanía había soportado bajo el arrogante y corrupto gobierno titular rojo.

Mientras tanto, con una economía en crisis y rumores desenfrenados de corrupción, la llegada de Covid-19 a Belize a principios del año 2020 de elecciones generales, con un estado de emergencia declarado en marzo, probablemente funcionó a favor del actual gobierno UDP, ya que la ansiosa oposición PUP no podía realizar reuniones públicas o manifestaciones para energizar a sus seguidores. Esto puede haber causado que el PUP se pusiera un poco ansioso; no sabían lo que estaba en la mente de esos astutos votantes beliceños "en el cerco", quienes, como se supo más tarde, ya se habían decidido por una gran barrida.

Entonces, el PUP hizo todo lo posible. Y qué campaña fue, revelando en los meses previos a la fecha de las elecciones del 11 de noviembre, partes y piezas de su manifiesto PlanBelize, un documento muy bien pensado, que lanzaron dramáticamente en una gran ceremonia de apertura un par de semanas antes de las elecciones.

Obviamente, se había invertido mucho trabajo en PlanBelize, y demostró claramente que el grupo de expertos del PUP había investigado y analizado los temas principales que más importaban al electorado beliceño en estas elecciones. Y los temas principales que resonaron en el lenguaje de PlanBelize fueron los temas de "buena gobernanza" y acabar con la corrupción mediante la promulgación de legislación similar a la CNUCC. El crecimiento de la economía y todo lo que conlleva es siempre un objetivo deseable, pero el estado de ánimo general de los beliceños parecía ser que si los problemas de buena gobernanza y corrupción se abordaban adecuadamente, el efecto en la economía sería como gasolina en el tanque de un motor fallando.

Con los vientos tormentosos y la poca visibilidad de Covid-19 a principios de 2020, el titular UDP liderado por Dean Barrow prácticamente "apagó el motor" y se concentró en capear la tormenta, pero aún con poco esfuerzo para corregir los muchos errores y deficiencias de su variopinta tripulación, con la foto de uno todavía publicado en un boletín de búsqueda de la policía.

Habiendo tomado el control del gobierno después de la barrida del 11 de noviembre de 2020 en las urnas, el gobierno PUP liderado por John Briceño tenía un buen plan, PlanBelize, ya en la mano, y con Covid o sin Covid, estaban decididos a guiarse por su plan para sacar al país de su peligro sanitario y económico. La lluvia punzante y los fuertes vientos en contra de Covid no disuadieron a la nave PUP, y no los desvió mucho de su rumbo, porque tenían su brújula, PlanBelize, para guiarlos a través de la tormenta.

En la coyuntura actual, con avances en la agricultura, la economía en auge, el turismo ganando algo de tracción, la construcción de casas y la distribución de títulos de propiedad,

la crisis del azúcar resuelta y los cítricos buscando un repunte, el Superbono reemplazado por el bastante manejable bono azul de The Nature Conservancy, y ahora la variante Omicron de Covid pareciendo ser menos letal, aunque muchas veces más contagiosa que Delta, hay muchos motivos para el optimismo en 2022.

Por supuesto, está lejos de ser bueno. Hay muchas bocas hambrientas y muchos ciudadanos desempleados y desesperados, y el crimen y la violencia están fuera de control, pero los líderes del PUP pueden felicitarse por sus primeros logros. Sin embargo, tienen mucho más que hacer.

El mar político ahora puede parecer mucho más tranquilo, y la visibilidad mucho mejor para el gobierno PUP liderado por John Briceño, pero los siempre escépticos fanáticos no partidarios actualmente están preocupados de que tal vez el PUP ahora esté pensando en descartar su brújula, PlanBelize, olvidando algunos de los compromisos contenidos en ella que aún se consideran críticos para el progreso y desarrollo sostenido de nuestra nación. Covid puede haber sido una excusa para algún retraso, pero ya ha pasado más de un año, y algunos beliceños sospechan de cualquier "brisita" que sople en este momento.

El PlanBelize del PUP, lanzado oficialmente en una ceremonia en el Belize Biltmore Plaza el jueves 22 de octubre de 2020, constaba de tres documentos principales: "10 pasos del PUP para eliminar la corrupción", "Buena gobernanza: una responsabilidad compartida" y "Seis Pasos para hacer que el gobierno sea más responsable", que se puede ver en su sitio web en www.pup.org.bz.

No es nuestra intención "arrojar agua fría" sobre los muchos grandes logros hasta ahora de este nuevo gobierno PUP bajo las difíciles circunstancias de Covid-19; pero es nuestro deber recordarles gentilmente que las áreas más críticas de preocupación de los beliceños aún deben abordarse adecuadamente en cuanto a legislación de "buena gobernanza" y "corrupción". Apéguense al PlanBelize que consiguió que lo eligieran, y no puede equivocarse.

Algunos elementos destacados de PlanBelize son los siguientes:

La Comisión de Integridad debe hacer su trabajo con eficacia. Para ello ya no debería estar controlada por el Partido en el Gobierno. Asimismo, estableceremos un mecanismo para asegurar la independencia financiera de la Comisión de Integridad con un presupuesto que será aprobado por la Asamblea Nacional...

Designar de inmediato a todo el personal profesional de la Comisión de Integridad (CI) y proporcionar los fondos necesarios para que su Secretaría cumpla las importantes funciones legales, de auditoría e investigación sin ninguna indebida influencia política. La CI estará capacitada para acelerar la implementación de los compromisos bajo el acuerdo de la CNUCC...

Inmediatamente firmaremos, ratificaremos y nos vamos a adherir plenamente a la Convención de las Naciones Unidas contra la Corrupción (CNUCC), y accederemos a las excelentes pautas, asistencia técnica y recursos proporcionados a los signatarios...

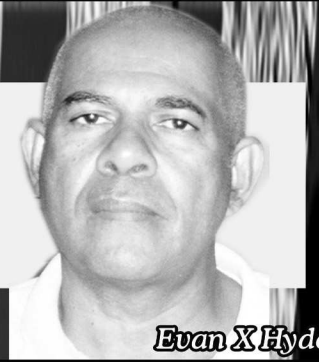
Tomar medidas inmediatas para restaurar la autonomía del servicio público (evitar la microgestión por parte de la dirección política)... Volver a tener Secretarios Permanentes, es decir, utilizar altos funcionarios públicos de larga trayectoria, como contadores de los Ministerios...

Implementar un transparente ejercicio de redistribución de distritos, libre de cualquier apariencia de manipulación política, con el objetivo siendo una representación justa del público...

Para una representación y participación justa y efectiva, garantizar la independencia de la Comisión de Elecciones y Límites para que esté libre de interferencias políticas. Su Presidente debe ser designado de manera similar al Fiscal General y al Auditor General, para que la Comisión pueda ser autónoma y libre del control del gobierno...

"El dedo en movimiento escribe". No son nuestras palabras, Señorías, sino las suyas.

From the Publisher



Evan X Hyde

“Like the Freemasons, the Confederacy of the Humbled is a close-knit brotherhood whose members travel with no outward markings, but who know each other at a glance. For having fallen suddenly from grace, those in the Confederacy share a certain perspective. Knowing beauty, influence, fame, and privilege to be borrowed rather than bestowed, they are not easily impressed. They are not quick to envy or take offense. They certainly do not scour the papers in search of their own names. They remain committed to living among their peers, but they greet adulation with caution, ambition with sympathy, and condescension with an inward smile.”

- pg. 196, A GENTLEMAN IN MOSCOW, by Amor Towles, Viking, 2016.

In my younger, more militant days, there were a couple occasions on which I criticized my dad to the late Leroy Taegar. On those

occasions, Taegar basically said the same thing to me: our parents’ generation had done what they could under the colonial circumstances for the upliftment of their families and our people. Respect was due.

Looking back, I would say some of my problems in life may have begun because I took “education” (the word) literally. I believe the English word “educate” comes from a Latin verb called “educare,” which means, literally, to “lead out.” So that, education is supposed to be a process wherein one is led out of ignorance into enlightenment.

But there are power realities in colonized societies, such as British Honduras was. Our education was not pure, so to speak: it was structured so as to praise and glorify the British, and condemn or ignore other peoples, especially the Roman Catholic Spaniards. (Long story.) Attending primary and high schools in British Honduras in the 1950s and 1960s, we were taught almost

nothing about the French and absolutely nothing about the Russians.

This week a friend of mine sent an article to some of us which, I would say, considered the “accommodationism” of the late, great Sidney Poitier, a famous African-American movie actor who died this week at the age of 94. (I believe Poitier was born in the Bahamas.)

In response to that article and to my friend, I would say what Taegar said about my dad: Poitier and his generation did what they could under the “Jim Crow” circumstances for himself and his people.

But, Poitier was amply rewarded: with fame, with money, and with awards. There was an African American a few decades before Poitier, however, who was more talented than he, not only a superb actor, but a world class athlete and singer: his name was Paul Robeson. But you wouldn’t know anything about him, because he went against the capitalist power structure in the United States, and for that they “disappeared” his career. Real.

In Belize, mainly because of the fabulously talented Sandra Coye, we sometimes speak of the French Revolution, a very important revolution which occurred in 1789 and then precipitated the Haitian Revolution in 1791. But, we never speak of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which substantially affected the Mexican Revolution, which had begun in 1910, and precipitated the Chinese Revolution, which culminated with communist success in 1949.

Many of you know of Marcus Garvey, but what many of you don’t realize is that what was happening intellectually in Harlem (New York City) in Garvey’s time after World War I (1914-18) was seriously affected by what happened in Russia in 1917, which is to say, the working people had violently overthrown their tsarist monarchy and established communist rule.

The success of the working class revolution in Russia inspired courageous African Americans like Paul Robeson to dream of a change in the socio-economic realities of the United States of America. Robeson visited Russia and became an honored friend of the Russian

Revolution, and a prominent acquaintance of the various working classes in Eastern Europe. He broadened his revolutionary horizons.

Garvey, for his part, rejected communism out of hand. He built an incredibly powerful black organization, not only in the United States, but all over the world. If you think about it, Marcus Garvey’s most lasting legacy to the world may be Rastafarianism, which may be described as a religion. His organization, the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), was not able to withstand the onslaughts of the American power structure, and it was taken over by charlatans while Garvey was framed and incarcerated in Atlanta State Penitentiary in the late 1920s.

Sidney Poitier, I would say, basically made us feel good about ourselves as black people, but my friend’s article focused on how Poitier’s movie roles were “controlled” by the white power structure in America. There is a lot to analyze here. But these are the days of the internet, so you can do the research and find information and analytical pieces on Sidney Poitier for yourselves.

As black people in Belize, in our lifetime we have shrunk from being a clear majority of the population to being a clear minority. I have said to you that the Hon. Philip Goldson had to be sacrificed in order for this demographic change to be effected.

We live in a strange place, where we just experienced twelve and a half years of black Cabinet rule, from February of 2008 to November of 2020. Yet, we have incredible difficulty in finding any significant area where we, the descendants of slavery and colonialism, made any manifest progress as a people.

Yes, some of us became multi-millionaires. Just a few of us, mind you, and mostly attorneys. These were those of our people who “cut deals” with the real rulers. This is what Sidney Poitier did. He was a nice guy, beloved. Paul Robeson was the real warrior, and the real rulers in America kicked him all over the place. Such is life in the reality of the oppressed black people of planet earth.

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REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

Kazakhstan unrest was coup attempt, says president

KAZAKHSTAN Mon. Jan 10, 2022 (BBC News)

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has described deadly violence last week as an attempted coup d'etat.

He told leaders of a military alliance of ex-Soviet states the action had been co-ordinated by a "single centre", but did not name those responsible.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin said Kazakhstan had been targeted by international terrorism, but provided no evidence for this claim.

He added that Russia would never allow revolutions in the region.

Troops from Russia and other countries are currently in Kazakhstan to restore order.

The demonstrations, triggered by a rise in fuel prices, turned into the worst unrest the country has seen in its 30 years of independence. Dozens of people are reported to have died, including 16 members of the security forces.

The protests started on 2 January and grew to reflect discontent at the government and former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who led Kazakhstan for three decades and is still thought to retain significant influence.



A burnt minibus is pictured in Almaty, Kazakhstan's main city

Correspondents say the recent violence may be linked to a power struggle within the ruling elite.

A week after violence erupted, the authorities say the situation has now stabilised, with troops continuing "clean-up" operations and guarding strategic facilities.

A state of emergency and a nationwide curfew remain in place. Almost 8,000 people have been detained throughout the country, the Interior Ministry said on Monday.

The security talks between leaders of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) military alliance came as Kazakhstan began an official day of mourning to commemorate those killed in the unrest.

"Armed militants who were waiting

in the wings joined the protests. The main goal was obvious: the undermining of the constitutional order, the destruction of government institutions and the seizure of power. It was an attempted coup d'etat," Mr Tokayev said.

He said protesters had targeted Kazakhstan's biggest city, Almaty, with a view to seizing the country's southern regions and the capital, Nur-Sultan. A hunt for "terrorists" was continuing and Kazakhstan would soon give proof of what had happened to the international community, he added.

Mr Putin said he believed some involved in the violence in recent days had been trained in foreign countries, without giving evidence.

"Well organised and clearly managed groups of militants were used, about which President Tokayev just spoke, including those who obviously underwent training in terrorist camps abroad," Mr Putin told other leaders on the video conference.

"Events in Kazakhstan are not the first nor the last attempt to meddle into our internal affairs from abroad.

"Measures taken by CSTO show that we will not allow a destabilised situation in the region and we will not let them carry out so-called colour revolutions."

Last week, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken questioned Kazakhstan's decision to seek Russian military help, as the first of about 2,030 Russian-led troops arrived in the country. Officials in Moscow gave assurances their presence was temporary.

Mr Blinken urged the Kazakh authorities to respect the rights of protesters while maintaining law and order.

Russia has long accused the West of encouraging uprisings in its backyard - so-called "colour revolutions" - that have brought down governments in former Soviet states such as Ukraine, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia.

Events in Kazakhstan come at a time when tensions are high over tens of thousands of Russian troops massed on the border with Ukraine, prompting fears of an invasion.

Full article can be viewed at : <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-59900738>

First published by BBC news.

Lenca Indigenous Journalist Pablo Hernandez Is Gunned Down



Pablo Hernandez - deceased

HONDURAS. Mon. Jan. 10, 2022 (Telesur English)

For years now, Honduras has become one of the most dangerous places for human rights defenders, environmental activists, journalists, and social leaders.

On Sunday, Honduran human rights defender Pablo Hernandez was murdered by several bullet shots in the back in the Tierra Colorada community, in the Lempira department.

Bertha Oliva, the coordinator of the Committee of Relatives of the Disappeared in Honduras (COFADEH), denounced that armed men ambushed Hernandez on a dirt road.

"This murder is one more attack on freedom of expression and the defense of human rights," The Association of Community Media in Honduras (AMCH) said, recalling that Hernandez was director of the Tenan community radio station that broadcasts from San Marcos de Caiquin.

"Hernandez was the second Lenca leader killed in less than a year. In March 2020, Lenca activist Juan Carlos Cerros was shot to death in the town of Nueva Granada," news agency AP recalled, adding that they "belonged to the same indigenous community as Berta Caceres, a prize-winning environmental and Indigenous rights defender who was murdered in 2016."

Full article can be viewed at : https://www.telesurenglish.net/news/Lenca-Indigenous-Journalist-Pablo-Hernandez-Is-Gunned-Down-20220110-0008.html?utm_source=planisys&utm_medium=NewsletterIngles&utm_campaign=NewsletterIngles&utm_content=8

First published by TeleSurEnglish.com

Heavy Rain Leaves 145 Cities In Emergency In Minas Gerais

BRAZIL, Mon. Jan. 10, 2021 (Telesur English)

The bad weather in this Brazilian state has caused the overflow of rivers, the suspension of mining activities, and effects on land transportation systems.

On Sunday, a strong rainstorm continued to hit the state of Minas Gerais in southeastern Brazil, where 145 cities are in an emergency situation due to floods, landslides, and damage to infrastructure.

Since the start of the rainy season in October, the Civil Defense has registered at least six deaths and about 17,000 evacuees from their homes due to the intense rainfall that is raging in the region. Brazilian authorities are also investigating the deaths of two people this weekend, which would also have been caused by the storm.

One of those victims was a 42-year-old woman who died when a house collapsed in Belo Horizonte, the capital of Minas Gerais, which is the second most populous state in Brazil, with some 21.5 million inhabitants.

On Saturday, a serious accident also took place on Lake Furnas, where a

huge rock wall from a canyon fell on four boats, leaving ten people dead and about 30 citizens injured. Civil Defense did not include these deaths in the balance of victims of the rains until the investigations are concluded.

In Nova Lima town, a dam of a mine of the French company Vallourec overflowed and caused the cut of the highway connecting Belo Horizonte and Rio de Janeiro. Besides forcing the evacuation of six people, this incident left a wounded citizen who had to be hospitalized.

As a precaution, the National Mining Agency (ANM) decided to stop the activities of the Vallourec mine due to the risk of collapse of the overflowing dam.

Local outlets also report that bad weather affected the circulation of trains on the Vitoria-Minas Railway (EFVM), especially in the Rio Piracicaba-Joao Monlevade section, which prevented the continuation of activities at the Brucutu mine and the Mariana complex.

First published by TeleSurEnglish.com

Another COVID-19 variant? Reports of Omicron and Delta combination surface

A Cyprus scientist claims to have discovered a new variant that is a combination of two other variants. Experts dismiss it as a mistake, warn of “fearmongering.”

by Khaila Gentle

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Sat. Jan. 8, 2022

Reports have surfaced that a researcher in Cyprus (a small island country located south of Greece) has discovered a new strain of the Covid-19 virus that has characteristics of both the Delta and Omicron variants. The new variant, given the name “Deltacron” by University of Cyprus professor Leondios Kostrikis, has reportedly been identified in 25 cases— a significant percent of which resulted in hospitalizations. But despite these unsettling reports, many scientific experts have come forward to state that they believe the “discovery” of Deltacron is nothing more than an error—a result of laboratory contamination, most likely.

One such expert, Dr. Krutika Kuppalli of the World Health Organization, stated via Twitter, “Deltacron is not real and is likely due to sequencing artefact (lab contamination of Omicron sequence fragments in a Delta specimen).”

Her view is shared by Dr. Jeffery Barrett, director of the Covid-19 Genomics Initiative at the Wellcome Sanger Institute in England. According to *The Independent* newspaper, Barrett stated, “This is almost certainly not a biological recombinant of the Delta and Omicron lineages.” Like Kuppalli, he suggested that it is “a telltale sign of laboratory contamination giving the impression of recombination.”

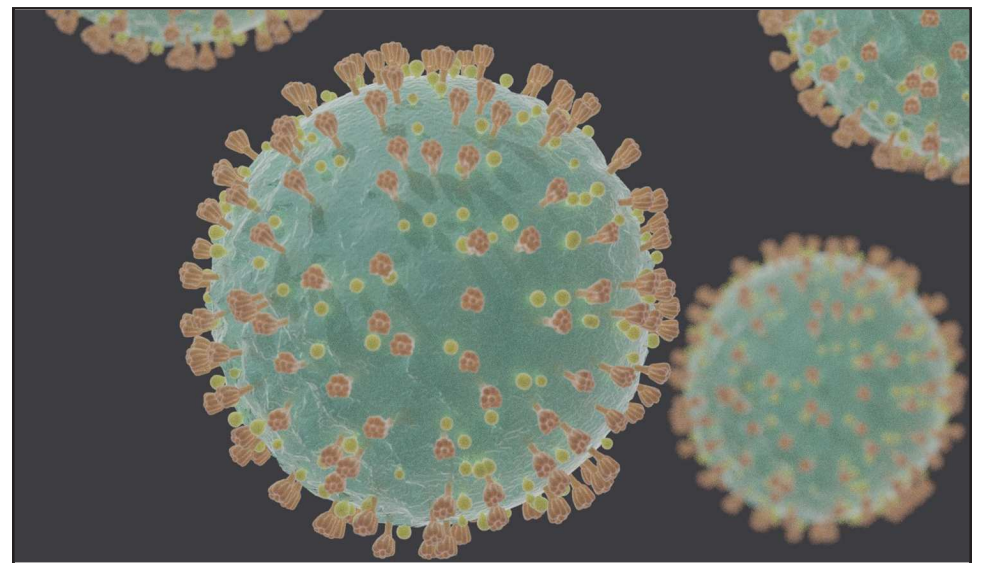
But despite being dismissed by several scientists and researchers,

Professor Kostrikis maintains his position, stating that he and his team arrived at their conclusion only after carrying out multiple sequencing tests, and he indicated that they have findings supporting their claim that a new variant has surfaced.

“These findings refute the undocumented statements that Deltacron is a result of a technical

error,” said Kostrikis.

This supposed new variant has emerged at a time when the Omicron variant is rapidly spreading across the globe. That includes here in Belize, according to last week’s press release from the Ministry of Health and Wellness. Most experts, however, remain unconcerned about Deltacron.



FROM THE PUBLISHER en Español

En mis días más jóvenes y militantes, hubo un par de ocasiones en las que critiqué a mi padre frente al finado Leroy Taegar. En esas ocasiones, Taegar básicamente me dijo lo mismo: la generación de nuestros padres había hecho todo lo posible bajo las circunstancias coloniales para mejorar a sus familias y nuestra gente. Se debía respeto.

Mirando hacia atrás, diría que algunos de mis problemas en la vida pueden haber comenzado porque tomé “educación” (la palabra) literalmente. Creo que la palabra inglesa “educar” proviene de un verbo latino llamado “educare”, que significa, literalmente, “guiar”. Entonces, se supone que la educación es un proceso en el que uno es llevado de la ignorancia a la iluminación.

Pero hay realidades de poder en las sociedades colonizadas, como lo fue Honduras Británica. Nuestra educación no era pura, por así decirlo: estaba estructurada para alabar y glorificar a los británicos, y despreciar o ignorar a otros pueblos, especialmente a los católicos romanos españoles. (Larga historia). Asistiendo a escuelas primarias y secundarias en Honduras Británica en las décadas de 1950 y 1960, no nos enseñaron casi nada sobre los franceses y absolutamente nada sobre los rusos.

Esta semana, un amigo mío nos envió un artículo a algunos de nosotros que, diría, consideraba el “acomodacionismo” del finado gran Sidney Poitier, un famoso actor de cine afroamericano que murió esta semana

a la edad de 94 años. (Creo que Poitier nació en las Bahamas).

En respuesta a ese artículo y a mi amigo, diría lo que dijo Taegar sobre mi padre: Poitier y su generación hicieron lo que pudieron bajo las circunstancias de “Jim Crow” para él y su gente.

Pero Poitier fue ampliamente recompensado: con fama, con dinero y con premios. Sin embargo, hubo un afroamericano unas décadas antes de Poitier que era más talentoso que él, no solo un excelente actor, sino un atleta y cantante de clase mundial: su nombre era Paul Robeson. Pero ustedes no sabrían nada de él, porque fue en contra de la estructura de poder capitalista en Estados Unidos, y por eso “desaparecieron” su carrera. En verdad.

En Belize, principalmente debido a la fabulosamente talentosa Sandra Coye, a veces hablamos de la Revolución Francesa, una revolución muy importante que ocurrió en 1789 y luego precipitó la Revolución Haitiana en 1791. Pero, nunca hablamos de la Revolución Rusa de 1917, que afectó sustancialmente la Revolución Mexicana, que había comenzado en 1910, y precipitó la Revolución China, que culminó con el éxito comunista en 1949.

Muchos de ustedes conocen de Marcus Garvey, pero lo que muchos de ustedes no saben es que lo que estaba sucediendo intelectualmente en Harlem (Nueva York) en la época de Garvey después de la Primera Guerra Mundial (1914-18) se vio seriamente afectado por lo que

sucedió en Rusia en 1917, es decir, el pueblo trabajador había derrocado violentamente su monarquía zarista y establecido el régimen comunista.

El éxito de la revolución de la clase obrera en Rusia inspiró a valientes afroamericanos como Paul Robeson a soñar con un cambio en las realidades socioeconómicas de los Estados Unidos de América. Robeson visitó Rusia y se convirtió en un amigo honrado de la Revolución Rusa y en un conocido destacado de las diversas clases trabajadoras de Europa del Este. Amplió sus horizontes revolucionarios.

Garvey, por su parte, rechazó el comunismo sin pensarlo dos veces. Construyó una organización negra increíblemente poderosa, no solo en los Estados Unidos, sino en todo el mundo. Si lo piensan, el legado más duradero de Marcus Garvey para el mundo puede ser el rastafarianismo, que puede describirse como una religión. Su organización, la Asociación Universal para el Mejoramiento de los Negros (UNIA, por sus siglas en inglés), no pudo resistir los ataques de la estructura de poder estadounidense, y los charlatanes se apoderaron de ella mientras Garvey fue incriminado y encarcelado en la Penitenciaría Estatal de Atlanta a fines de la década de 1920.

Sidney Poitier, diría, básicamente nos hizo sentir bien de nosotros mismos como personas negras, pero el artículo de mi amigo se centró en cómo los papeles cinematográficos

de Poitier estaban “controlados” por la estructura del poder blanco en Estados Unidos. Hay mucho que analizar aquí. Pero estos son los días de Internet, por lo que pueden investigar y encontrar información y piezas analíticas sobre Sidney Poitier por sí mismos.

Como personas negras en Belize, a lo largo de nuestra vida hemos pasado de ser una clara mayoría de la población a ser una clara minoría. Les he dicho que el Hon. Philip Goldson tuvo que ser sacrificado para que se efectuara este cambio demográfico.

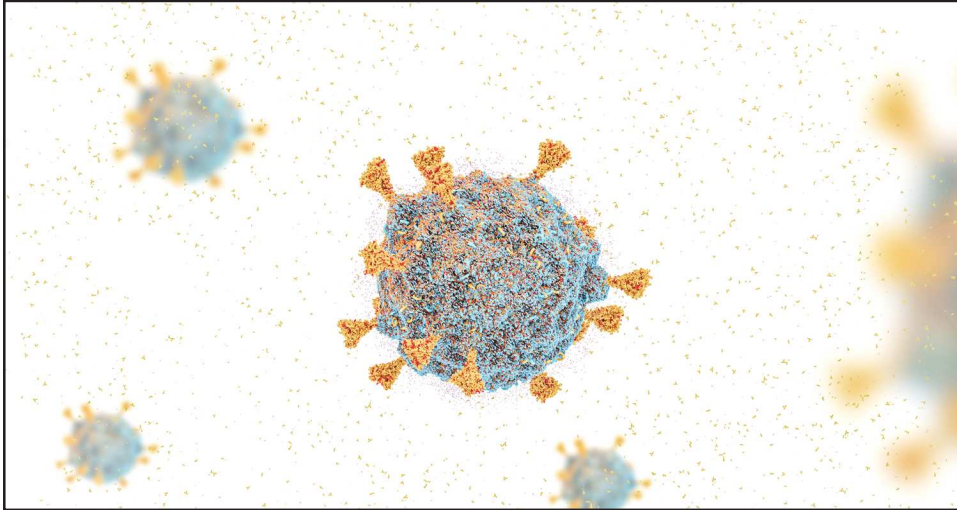
Vivimos en un lugar extraño, donde acabamos de experimentar doce años y medio de gobierno de un Gabinete negro, desde febrero de 2008 hasta noviembre de 2020. Sin embargo, tenemos una dificultad increíble para encontrar un área significativa donde nosotros, los descendientes de la esclavitud y el colonialismo, no hicimos ningún progreso manifiesto como pueblo.

Sí, algunos de nosotros nos hicimos multimillonarios. Solo unos pocos de nosotros, eso sí, y en su mayoría abogados. Estos fueron los de nuestra gente que “hicieron tratos” con los gobernantes verdaderos. Esto es lo que hizo Sidney Poitier. Era un buen tipo, queridos. Paul Robeson era el verdadero guerrero, y los verdaderos gobernantes de Estados Unidos lo patearon por todos lados. Así es la vida en la realidad de los negros oprimidos del planeta tierra.

¡Poder al pueblo!

Health & NUTRITION

Omicron Is Here: 5 Ways Parents Can Help Their Kids



by Lambeth Hochwald

Jan. 6, 2022

With the arrival of the Omicron variant, these are not easy days for parents, for kids, or for anyone who is trying to figure out what's best when it comes to the very simple act of attending school.

As we've seen, one day your child could be on the school bus heading to school, the next testing positive for COVID-19 and needing to quarantine for days. It's a dizzying time of stress, anxiety, and confusion

that is taking its toll.

"Everyone is so agitated right now," says Andrea Bonior, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist in private practice in Washington, DC, and author of *Detox Your Thoughts*.

There are things we can do to make it easier, she says. First is to take a pause.

"It's very easy to be reactionary in what we do and for things to escalate," Bonior says.

Instead, she says, think through your actions and recognize that the uncertainty surrounding us has everyone at a heightened state of alert.

And, while parents are among the most stressed right now, it's crucial for you to be available to your kids. After all, they've been navigating 2-plus years of a pandemic and may find this overwhelming virus surge scarier than you realize.

To help parents help their kids weather today and the days ahead, WebMD asked Steven Meyers, PhD, a professor and chair of psychology at Roosevelt University in Chicago, for the five things parents need to do — now:

1: Give kids the right information

Depending on how old your child is, tailor a message about the Omicron surge that's understandable.

"Given the uncertainty and misinformation out there, it's hard for parents to navigate this terrain, so just think about how hard it is on your kids," Meyers says.

Keep the message clear about how the whole family can stay safe and define what acceptable risk means.

"For example," he says, "if you have a family member who is immunocompromised, that risk will look different than if your family is young and healthy. The threat level will vary, and this is important to keep in mind because being COVID-positive will have different impacts on people's lives, depending on everyone's overall health."

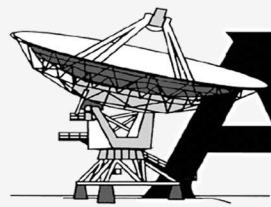
2: Lean into the unknowable

Instead of acting like you know it all, explain to your kids that the facts about the Omicron variant are developing as we learn more and more about it.

"Parents should explain that science is always changing, and as we learn more, the recommendations and decisions will change, too," Meyers says.

"When we're stressed, we tend to rely on safe versus unsafe, right versus wrong. But we have to get used to the idea that where we are right now with this pandemic, the guidance is going to keep changing just as the spread and the risk will keep changing."

3: Discuss what safety means to



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Year in Review 2021 – Part 2

Continued from Page 6

Also in June, there was worry within the health sector when it was learned that nurses were abandoning Belize for more attractive opportunities overseas. Some 35 Filipino nurses on special contracts resigned from the KMH. The lack of a meaningful retention package was blamed for the exodus along with Government's failure to increase the number of nursing jobs and key nursing posts in tandem with population growth.

The entire nation's attention was drawn to some mysterious smoke emanating from the mountains in the area of the Sleeping Giant. The plumes of smoke lasted for days and it was finally classified as burning debris collected on the forest floor, possibly lit by a lightning strike.



On June 16, 2021, Acting Chief Justice Michelle Arana ruled against the Government in favour of the village of Jalacte and ordered that residents of that village receive \$6.3 million compensation. The case had to do with the construction of a road to the border by the government on customary Maya

lands without the community's consent. The Government has indicated its intention to appeal.

Computer genius and antivirus



software pioneer, John McAfee, who had a colourful past and had resided for an extended period in Belize, passed away in a prison cell in Barcelona, Spain, at the age of 75.

On June 24, two Belizeans, Gladimir Chable and Chris Folgarait, were killed in broad daylight on the beach in Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico. The mother of one of the victims said she was unaware that the men were in Tulum and had

no knowledge of their activities.

On June 30, the Minister of Health and Wellness notified the country that the more severe Delta variant of the SARS-CoV-2 virus was believed to be in Belize.

To be continued

CSCPA in turmoil

(From page 1)

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Sun. Jan. 9, 2022

The discord within the Corozal Sugar Cane Producers Association (CSCPA) is once more in the spotlight after the association's board of directors sent out an urgent press release declaring that an annual general meeting (AGM) scheduled for Sunday, January 9, 2022, that is being publicized was not called by its members and is thus illegal.

Valdemar Puck, former chairman of the CSCPA, explained to local reporters last week, "This is a petition that we saw from this gentleman, Mr. Everaldo Uk, requesting to conduct a special meeting is the big question. He formally is not a member of this organization. He has been expelled for the past 2 years, so it is something that is very concerning. How can a non-member be applying for something as important as an AGM, looking at the situation with Covid, which makes it worse."

According to Puck, Uk has not been a member of the association for about two years, and the association was informed, after seeking legal advice, that the meeting organized by Uk is illegal. The CSCPA also stated that such a meeting would put the association's Fairtrade status at risk, since according to Fairtrade International, "any unwarranted breach of certification standards, will be dealt with in either a suspension or decertification."

It is being reported, however, that over the weekend Uk was elected as the new chairman of the CSCPA, along with a new board of directors. As a result of the elections, a group



Valdemar Puck

from the CSCPA was awaiting the removal of Puck and his board of directors from the CSCPA building on Monday morning. However, Puck and his team were refusing to leave the building, since they do not recognize the newly elected board of directors as being legitimate.

In regard to how often an AGM should be held, Puck said, "Well, firstly, general meetings are held in the month of November, and those things that we need to have in mind, the same thing as October is used to do elections, so those are the time set, so it is very surprising that at this point in time anyone can apply for a special meeting for an organization which is private and conduct one as such. Number one is that this gentleman is not a member of the CSCPA; that is the first rule that is being broken there. I can clearly say it is an illegal meeting, and that is being addressed at this moment as we speak by our legal minds."

Boards of the association are elected to serve three-year terms. Subsequent to the recognition of an interim board of directors of the association at the Corozal Civic Centre, there were elections in the four zones comprising the association: Zones 1 and 4 in 2017 (at which two directors were elected for a three-year term); Zone 2 in 2018 and Zone 3 in 2019. The terms of the members for Zones 1 and 4 thus reached an end in 2020; while the terms of those elected in Zone 2 ended in 2021 and the term of those in Zone 3 ends this year, 2022.

Omicron Is Here: 5 Ways Parents Can Help Their Kids

Continued from Page 12

everyone

If your child says they don't want to go to school due to the risk of catching COVID, listen to their concerns.

"Then calmly explain that you've followed vaccine guidelines and that it's important to be as safe as possible, depending on his or her age and when he or she got their vaccine and booster," Meyers says. "Remember that each person in your family will have a very individual reaction to a situation like this and will have different worries and concerns."

4: Watch for anxiety warning signs
As parents know, kids right now are

facing considerable stress and anxiety about the pandemic and are fatigued from 2 years of this.

"Especially among teens, some will keep their fears to themselves, while others will let them leak out through less productive channels, such as erroneous social media postings, headaches, stomachaches, or an inability to sleep," Meyers says. "It's key for parents to play close attention to these signs of anxiety and keep the lines of communication open."

5: Help your teen rethink FOMO

When teens see Instagram stories featuring their friends partying and gathering in large groups right now, the fear of missing out — or FOMO — is

real.

As a parent, you can turn FOMO into something pretty amazing, Meyers says.

"Emphasize the virtue in being safe," he says. "Try to help your teen find a way to transfer this from a feeling of loss to a feeling of what we can gain."

An example, he says, is that following safety protocols means not only that we stay healthy, but we protect those we care about.

"We are collectively contributing to health of our community," he says. "That might not sound fun, but it's very important. Parents need to frame being considerate to others as a genuine strength, not a weak consolation prize."

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Chebat from Health to Public Utilities

Continued from Page 1

representative and three-time mayor of Orange Walk Town. In the release, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño notes that a comprehensive review was carried out of each Cabinet minister's portfolio, and their performance, and the effectiveness of their leadership over the past year. The PM feels that these changes will enhance the work of the Cabinet and move the administration toward achieving key governance goals.

The GoB release states, "Hon. Kevin Bernard will now serve as Minister of Health and Wellness; Hon. Michel Chebat will now serve as Minister of Public Utilities and Logistics; and Hon. Rodwell Ferguson will now serve as Minister of Transport, Youth, and Sports."

The release also states that the Prime Minister's office will now take over coordination of the National Security Council. The release states that the PM has already advised Governor General H.E. Froyla Tzalam that the portfolio reassignments are to take immediate effect.

In addition to these changes, Hon. Francis Fonseca and Hon. Henry Charles Usher will have additional responsibilities annexed to their current portfolios. Hon. Fonseca will now also serve as Minister of E-Governance, while Hon. Henry Charles will serve additionally as Minister of Religious Affairs.

While these major changes could be seen as being a response to public outcry for the removal of Hon. Michel Chebat from the head of the Health Ministry, and for the

appointment of a medical professional or someone with a background in public health to head the ministry, the decision still falls short, since Kevin Bernard studied Business Administration. The release from Cabinet states, however, that Bernard, "has considerable experience in a broad spectrum of public sector and stakeholder management." At this time, there is no indication whether the person selected to be the CEO in the Health Ministry, Dr. Lesbia Guerra, has assumed the post.

During an interview with Hon. Usher today he said, "For some time now I've been advocating for a liaison between the government and the Council of Churches. I keep asking the Prime Minister month after month, can we get a liaison officer between Cabinet and the Council of Churches,

so I guess this was a way of getting me off of his back in this request. But certainly, I welcome the challenge, I welcome the opportunity of merging the public service with the Christian fundamental principles upon which our country is based."

In the press release, the PM said that all Cabinet ministers, including those having their portfolio reassigned, have his full confidence. He added, however, "My constitutional obligation as a steward of the Executive requires the fine-tuning of ministerial designations from time to time, and in view of the current circumstances, I am convinced that the new assignments will further the national interest."

He also remarked that Minister Chebat, "is particularly suited to tackle the complexities of public utilities and logistics."

Schools finally reopen



Continued from Page 1

in the face of the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In interviews with the media, principals Karen Canto and Indira Bowden of Edward P. Yorke High School and Belmopan Methodist High School respectively, provided a glimpse into what hybrid learning will be like for schools and what the future holds for teachers and students alike.

In the case of Edward P. Yorke High School, Principal Karen Canto said that Monday, January 10, 2022, is the first day back for students. Only fourth-form students, however, are on campus for now.

"Initially, we had planned for the entire school, in a shift system, so that we would have had first to fourth form, but half of each class in each room and the other half would be at home," said Canto. "When the numbers started to rise, we realized maybe we don't want to have so many kids because half of our population would be over 325—and that's half," she noted.

As a result, EP Yorke has decided to limit in-person classes to fourth formers, who will be sitting the CXC exams very soon. Come next month, however, Principal Canto expects that students from first form to fourth form will be back on

campus, and she said that classes will be conducted via a shift system.

Much like EP Yorke, Belmopan Methodist High School expects a full reopening come February. For now, though, only 40 students are attending classes on the school's campus each day, with first and second form students attending on Mondays and Wednesdays and third and fourth form students attending on Tuesdays and Thursdays. According to Principal Indira Bowden, the high school started having in-person classes back in December—a move made to accommodate students who were not performing well at home and those who did not have the necessary devices for online learning.

When asked what parents thought about the return to in-person classes, Principal Bowden said the following:

"Majority of parents are looking forward to the opportunity for their child to be back in the classroom. It's been two years since students are out, and I think by now they realize that students need to be back."

Bowden also urged parents to have their children vaccinated. Currently, somewhere around 80% of the school's students are vaccinated, along with 98% of its

Peyrefitte to PM: show us who got the money

Continued from Page 1

the major debt-for-conservation swap agreement were paid substantial sums for their work on behalf of the country. Peyrefitte sent the first letter of request on December 23, but according to his most recent letter, received no reply from the PM.

"The time within which you were to honor my request in my attached letter has lapsed. Your clear refusal to provide me with information that you are required to provide me with under the law is extremely disappointing," his second letter, which carries today's date, states.

He is now threatening to take the issue to the Office of the Ombudsman and then the courts if necessary. Peyrefitte is giving the PM until January 14 to comply with his request.

The letter states, "Prime Minister, the people of Belize want to know, and are entitled to know, to which lawyers and 'advisors' \$15,000,000 was appropriated to pay for the 'Blue Bond Issue.'"

Peyrefitte asserts that if there is nothing to hide, the requests would be easily satisfied through the

teachers.

Both Principals Bowden and Canto have said that their students are excited to be back on campus and in the classroom with teachers. Like all other schools that are reopening this week, they have implemented several safety measures to ensure COVID-19 protocols are met, such as sanitization and hand-washing stations, distanced classroom seating, social distancing markers, and monitoring of students during breaks to prevent crowding.

provision of the relevant documentation. "Prime Minister, this is not rocket science. If nothing untoward has taken place, then simply provide the information and the accompanying documentation as requested," the letter states at its conclusion.

There has not been a reply so far from the Office of the Prime Minister. It is to be noted, however, that in several press releases issued by the GoB to update the public on the buyback of the Superbond, a list of firms and advisory services (most of which are internationally known companies) which performed key roles in the negotiation were provided — and the names on that list would likely be recognized by Peyrefitte as the same entities which had carried out Superbond negotiations during the Barrow administration, of which Peyrefitte was a part. It is not clear whether Peyrefitte was aware of the remuneration structure that was used at that time, but a helpful reference would be the typical remuneration structures outlined by these companies for transactions of such magnitude. These are an international standard that provide insights into what an advisor involved in orchestrating such a complex deal, would receive — with the compensation oftentimes being based on what type of outcome was achieved through such transactions. In the case of the Superbond, the compensation might likely have been calculated on the basis of the amount of savings achieved.

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Stevedore killed seconds away from home

Continued from Page 1

shooting which took place on Friday night. This morning, we visited the grieving family of Lopez, who expressed their belief that negligence on the part of the police may have contributed to the death of their loved one.

Lopez was ambushed on Fabers Road near an open lot just adjacent to a grocery store in the area. Reports are that an SUV had been repeatedly passing along that street before the shooting took place. Unconfirmed reports from local media are that two men later exited that SUV and ambushed Lopez with a hail of bullets — as many as 15, reports say. Eyewitnesses of the shooting are alleging that while one of the men ran away after shooting Lopez, another followed the injured victim and stood over his body to fire additional shots — coldly completing the execution.

When Lopez's family arrived on the scene, they found him motionless and in a fetal position, with blood continuing to flow from his gunshot wounds. He was transported to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead last night. His family at this time remains uncertain as to what could have led to his shooting death, since Daniel, known to be a very private and hardworking young man, continued to be, in their eyes, the child whom they had raised. They have indicated, however, that they cannot vouch for his actions outside the household.

On Friday night, Andre Stain was shot on North Creek — the only shooting recorded in Belize City for Friday, and reports are that Lopez was detained during police's investigation of that shooting. His family said that he cooperatively went with police to the police station without objecting or resisting, and an officer had promised them that he would ensure that Lopez was returned to the home following questioning if no charges were

brought against him.

On Sunday night before 9:00, he was released from police custody but was neither taken home as had been promised nor given the opportunity to call family members to pick him up. His family said that the failure of the police to do so placed his life at greater risk, since at his detention he was effectively paraded across the city, without a mask, following the Friday night shooting.

They remember him as a very private and humble young man. In November 2019, Lopez was shot in the leg on Neal Pen Road.

Today, during the weekly police press conference, the Police Department's communications director, ASP Fitzroy Yearwood, told local media that the department is saddened that Lopez lost his life after he was cleared by police of any involvement in the Friday night shooting. Yearwood explained that he had been detained with several others in connection with the shooting on Friday night which injured Andrew Stain.

"If the police knew that he would have been harmed upon being released, I'm certain that the officer would have tried everything in their power to keeping him safe. It's very sad that the family feels this way," ASP Yearwood said.

He confirmed reports that an SUV was used by two men to carry out this fatal attack on Lopez. Several persons are detained at this time in connection with the murder of Lopez, and are being questioned by investigators, but no charges have been levied as yet.

Yearwood told reporters that the department is not able at this time to indicate conclusively what the motive was for the shooting of Lopez. This morning, Lopez's mother, in tears and still grasping onto his bloodied shirt, told us she feels pain every time she sees young murder victims and said she tried her best to raise her son to be an upright young man.

PUC's response to BEL

Continued from Page 1

Electricity Rate (M.E.R) from 39.9 cents to 41.5 cents that could be effected for the period extending from January to June of this year. Last week, AMANDALA reported that BEL, the monopoly electricity company in Belize, had submitted information which outlined to the PUC higher-than projected costs incurred (and to be incurred) by the company in the purchase of power at the end of 2021 and in the upcoming months. The regulator later moved to table an increase in the M.E.R. following an extended exchange of correspondence with the company, and at the end of the day, the PUC determined that it would be prudent to apply the increase to electricity rates at the current time, rather than risk an increase in the future which would result in a heavier burden for the consumers.

"We saw it strange that there [was] no direct request for a rate increase but at the same time, they are telling you that there is a projection that the customers will owe BEL this amount of money. So, we here at the commission have to present this scenario to the commissioners and the commissioners have to do their decision, and basically, they can decide to go ahead and make the adjustment now or adjust it later. Now, adjusting it later, because of the regulatory process, the next opportunity for adjustment is basically on the rate review period 2023-2024, and at that time you don't know what the variant in cost of power will be, if it will balloon bigger, and would become a bigger hit for the customer. So, in that decision for the commission, with our recalculation and everything, we concluded that it is prudent now to adjust the 4.5 million dollars by 1 and 1/2 cents now than procrastinating and leaving it for, that is a commission decision in the best interest of customers," Ernesto Gomez, Director of Tariff Compliance and Standards at the PUC, told local media in a press conference last week.

The final decision will be released by the PUC on January 20, following the consultation period, which ends on January 15. Gomez said that normally, a request to increase rates to recover the added cost of power would have been annexed to such a submission from BEL, in which higher costs are outlined. These externalities that are to be recovered from customers through higher rates are estimated to be almost 5 million dollars, according to the projections on the cost of power from January to June. But the PUC indicated that this could have been anticipated and averted if the company had accounted for the realities of climate change and the unnatural weather patterns that the world is experiencing due to the global crisis.

Last week BEL informed the public that they had made an earlier decision to acquire power from BECOL, since the dam at that location was near spill levels due to an increase in rain in late August. If the spill had occurred,

the company would have incurred spill charges, which would have been passed on to customers. The rains, however, did not continue, and the power from the BECOL plant was dispatched until the water in the dam had sunk to low levels. This water is not expected to be released until the projected rains in February, forcing the company to purchase power from other sources like CFE Mexico and other domestic independent power providers. Gomez said that if the rains had continued, the company's decision would have been prudent, but the rains ceased. He said that if elements of climatology had been used in BEL's projections, they would have probably made the right decision to purchase cheaper power from CFE in Mexico and to save the potential power from the Fortis-owned BECOL.

"Since 2014 to 2015 patterns have been changing due to climate change and the way you manage the water has to be with the best future information, the next day ahead, week ahead, month ahead, and maybe the next quarter ahead. Because, relying on past information can be tricky, especially since the climate is not really following history. So, what happened there is that in August, about the 25th of August, they did get a lot of rain and they actually built up about 8 meters of water in the dam. When they saw that, it was obvious to think that there is a lot of rain coming, so they better use the dam. But it didn't rain anymore, and the regional forecast from the Caribbean was basically that Belize is supposed to be on a drought watch, and they didn't forecast any rain; actually, they are not forecasting any rain until February," Gomez said.

He said that, based on historical information, the actions of BEL are in a way understandable — drying the dam to avoid spillage that would result in millions of dollars in charges, but by late September those waters in the dam reached such low levels that they could not be used.

"While they were draining the dam, they were foregoing some very, very cheap prices from Mexico. In my opinion, a little bit of climatology there could have moved the decisions better, and those variances could have been much more improved. So, that decision eliminated the water from the dam, which is a resource that we need, so there is no more for October, no more for September, and as a result, the problem is extended all the way until the rain comes," Gomez stated.

The PUC representative said that they hope independent power providers like Santander and BELCOGEN can provide additional power, due to the commencement of milling, to supplement the shortfall left by the lack of hydropower from BECOL. He maintains that the dispatch decision by BEL could have been made differently if they had paid some attention to the unpredictable weather patterns brought on by climate change.

STAYING COVID FREE

wash your hands

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are unavailable, clean your hands with an alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

practice social distancing

- Stay a safe distance - at least 6 feet apart - from others not in your household in both indoor and outdoor spaces.



wear a mask

- Wear a mask that covers both your nose and mouth in public spaces. Face masks can help protect others and prevent both asymptomatic and symptomatic spread of COVID-19.



Sales Agents

BELIZE CITY

- * Puma Roundabout
- * Puma, 2 Mls.
- * Shell Service Station, C.A. Boulevard
- * Community Drug Store
- * William Supermarket, C.A. Boulevard
- * Fuel Logistics/Bel-China
- * Puma Freetown
- * Cambranes
- * J & K Supermarket
- * Twin Supermarket, 5526 St. Thomas Street
- * Tow Tow Grocery Store, Mahogany Street
- * Julie Wong Store, Belama (by police station)
- * JB's Store, Mahogany Street
- * 88 Shopping Center, C.A. Boulevard
- * Freetown Drug Store
- * Publics, Philip Goldson Highway
- * Buca Shell, Philip Goldson Highway
- * James Brodie & Co., Albert St., and Philip Goldson Highway
- * 1st Choice Pharmacy
- * Save-U Supermarket

PLACENCIA

- * Placencia Office Supplies

LADYVILLE

- * Puma Service Station
- * Shell Service Station
- * Low's Supermarket

ORANGEWALK

- * One Stop Service Station
- * People's Store

BENQUE

- * Eduard Cambranes
6 Diaz St., Benque

CAYO

- * Amini Habet
C/o Shell Service Station
San Ignacio
- * Venus Store

BELMOPAN

- Dakers Stationery & Books
- * Hydes Mini Market
- * First Choice Variety Gift Shop
- * Shell Service Station
- * Medicare Plus Pharmacy

STANN CREEK

- * Xaibel Service Station
- * S & S One Stop
C/o Uno Belize
- * St. Vincent Convenience Store

COROZAL

- * Aguilar Car Care Products # 60 4th Avenue,
Corozal Town
- * Xiomara Alcala c/o Corozal Farmer's Supplies
99 - 5th Avenue, Corozal Town
- * Elena Castaneda WE Store Gabriel Hoare
Market #A8 6th Avenue, Corozal Town

INDEPENDENCE

- * G N J Mart

PUNTA GORDA

- * King's Texaco
- * NJV Pharmacy

Amandala business and editorial offices:
3304 Partridge Street, Belize City, Belize, Central America
is printed twice weekly by the
Amandala Press.

Telephones: 501-280-4703/202-4477

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