

Belize's leading newspaper

# Faber steps down



Hon. Patrick Faber

## Resignation set for January 31

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

This afternoon Patrick Faber released a video message announcing his resignation as the UDP party leader and Leader of the Opposition. He will officially leave those offices on the 31st of this month after a host of calls for his resignation following yet another domestic abuse allegation, which, this time, stemmed from a report made by his fiancée, Dr. Shanikka Arnold. As widely

reported, Dr. Arnold has since recanted her statement and Faber has been cleared of the charges in the courts, but he has, to a great extent, lost his standing in the public eye and is viewed by many in the public and within his party as an unfit leader.

"It is with a very heavy heart that I stand before you today to

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## BDF soldiers sent to PBL

Did the state order the BDF to unload ships at the Port of Belize?



Guy Neal – stevedore for 40 years

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Last Friday, stevedores were on watch at the compound of the Port of Belize after Belize Defence Force soldiers were taken to the pier head when the gang of stevedores scheduled to unload the ships on that day refrained from doing so in an attempt to protest a number of

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## Mia Mottley & the BLP sweep Barbados elections

Mottley's landslide victory comes just two months after Barbados removed Queen Elizabeth II as its head of state and became a republic

by Khaila Gentle

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, Thurs. Jan. 20, 2022

Barbados Prime Minister Mia Mottley has secured a second term in office after a landslide victory in the country's first elections since becoming a republic. Preliminary results from the election this past Thursday reveal that the Barbados Labor Party (BLP), led by Mia Amor Mottley, secured all 30 seats in the

House of Assembly. This is the party's second clean sweep victory, the first being in the 2018 elections.

The results were announced in the wee hours of Thursday morning and were met with much fanfare. A sea of red shirts and flags filled the grounds of the BLP headquarters as supporters stood listening to the PM's victory speech.

"We stand today on the morning of

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Mia Amor Mottley – Prime Minister of Barbados

## COMPOL speaks on recent murder spike



COMPOL Chester Williams

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Police were sent into high alert in the latter part of last week following a spike in murders within Belize City limits. On Thursday night, Michael Lambey was killed in the Jane Usher area; on Friday morning, Joseph "Tanga" James was executed following a

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## 8 COPA passengers flee country after seeking asylum

Eight of the 37 COPA passengers denied entry into Belize were allowed to remain as refugees but have instead fled to Mexico

by Khaila Gentle

BELMOPAN, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Last week we reported that 37 passengers onboard a COPA flight that landed on Tuesday at the Philip Goldson International Airport were denied leave to enter Belize, but were later taken to the Best Western Belize Biltmore Hotel after a night in detention at the Queen Street Police Station. Today, the

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## Is COVID-19 becoming endemic? Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa explains.

While symptoms of the Omicron variant are mild, Dr. Musa says we shouldn't throw caution to the wind just yet

by Khaila Gentle

BELIZE CITY, Wed. Jan. 19, 2022

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Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa

## Domestic abuse charges read to Opposition Leader

(See story on page 3)



# Terminated school wardens claim political victimization

by *Khaila Gentle*

BELIZE CITY, Tues. Jan. 18, 2022

A number of school security wardens showed up at the University of Belize's Education and Arts campus (formerly Teacher's College) on Monday to receive termination letters which they claim provided no explanation for their dismissal. Many of them have also expressed their belief that the sudden mass firings are politically motivated.

One former warden, Miss Ingrid Hernandez, spoke with *Amandala* via telephone about what transpired. According to Hernandez, she received a call on Friday and was told to report to the Truancy Unit of the Ministry of Education before heading to work on Monday. But it wasn't until she and a few other women arrived at the UB Campus at around 8:00 a.m. that they were told they were being fired. After three and a half hours of waiting, the women were all handed termination letters.

Hernandez, who was employed at the Ladyville Evangelical School for five and a half years, says that many of her former colleagues have been left devastated by the sudden termination, including one woman

who is a widow and single mother of five.

In an interview with local media, School Security Warden Program Coordinator at the Ministry of Education, Rafael Sosa claimed that the mass terminations are being carried out after the ministry discovered that many wardens were often failing to report to duty or were absent from their workstations. She stated that a number of wardens had been collecting paychecks without performing their duties and that a thorough review of the warden system had to be done to ensure that the persons assigned to be wardens are committed to their responsibilities and are equipped, in the midst of a pandemic, to enforce Covid-19 protocols.

Miss Hernandez, however, has stated that she made it her duty to report to work—which involved signing a logbook—on a daily basis and that she can say the same for her colleagues. She feels that the sudden firings are an act of political victimization due to the fact that many of the wardens were hired during the UDP administration. She also stated that as soon as they were fired, other wardens were already

being recruited to replace them.

On Tuesday, the United Democratic Party issued a press release condemning the Education Ministry for terminating the officers at a time when schools are beginning to return to face-to-face learning—when those wardens' services and past experience will be particularly valuable.

"We recall the mass firings of our transport workers just in time for George Price Day in January of 2021; and one year later, the school wardens were dealt the same fate, as they were served with their termination letters on January 14, 2022," said the release. "The school wardens, who have many years of experience in carrying out their duties and who were better equipped to keep our students safe during this raging pandemic, were sent home to make way for new wardens." (Hernandez said that those who were being hired to replace them "don't have any training in what to do and how to run the affairs of the school compound".)

The opposition party went on to state that the Ministry of Education is "plotting a politically motivated scheme," while "leaving many homes without a source of income during an already challenging time."

According to the release, over 20 wardens from the Belize and Stann Creek Districts were abruptly fired, including one pregnant woman, Agnes Thompson, who was just about to go on maternity leave.

That woman, Thompson, told



*Agnes Thompson*

*7News* earlier this week, "It's definitely politically motivated. My party changes. Everybody knows that I am a supporter of the UDP, everybody know that I am a street captain for Ms. Beverley Williams in Belize Rural Central, so it was just a matter of time, but this time specifically is more than likely wrong, you know. I am almost time to go on maternity leave, and according to my understanding, a mother expecting should never be terminated, so I will seek further advice on this."

The mass firings are being carried out just a few weeks after principals of several schools pointed out the important role that school wardens play in ensuring that COVID-19 protocols are followed on campuses as schools reopen during the pandemic. The letter indicates that the persons were given temporary employment and the letter states that those persons were terminated in accordance with section 24(1) of the General Workers Regulations. The letter was signed by Education Ministry CEO Diane Maheia.

## Update on school reopening

**456 students and 313 teachers infected with COVID-19 since school reopening**

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 21, 2022

Yesterday, Cabinet issued a press brief that included an update on the reopening of schools across the country. To date, 568 schools have been granted approval to transition to hybrid learning. Of those 568 institutions, 402 schools are opened and are at least partially delivering in-person instruction. These schools account for 71% of approved schools and 66% of all schools. At this time, around 203 schools are still engaged in remote learning only; this is 34 percent of all schools. But while more schools have transitioned to hybrid learning, cases of COVID-19 are beginning to emerge among both teachers and students, but according to data from the Ministry of Education, the number of cases that can be traced to classroom interaction are relatively low.

According to the data from Cabinet, between January 10 and 17, the Ministry of Health and Wellness recorded 313 cases of COVID-19 infection among teachers and 456 cases among students. The release from Cabinet states, however, "When compared to cases among students, out of the 456 cases confirmed, 67 were confirmed among students who were actively engaging in hybrid learning. The cases recorded among teachers affected 1.4 percent of teachers actively engaging in hybrid

learning. Among students, the rate was even lower, with cases affecting only 0.27 percent of all students actively engaging in hybrid learning."

The reopening of schools remains a priority for this administration, with the government recently postponing the reopening of the land borders to ensure a smooth transition to hybrid learning. The reopening at this time, however, is being viewed as risky by many in the community, since the country is now at its peak of the fourth COVID-19 wave, brought on by the new, highly transmissible Omicron variant. There have been requests in some quarters for the government to put off the reopening, but the Education CEO has stated that the parties, teachers, parents, students, and the schools are resolute about a return to the classroom.

Minister of Education, Hon. Francis Fonseca told the media that after rigorous analysis of the data locally and from other partner nations it became clear that the negative impact of children being outside the classroom is tremendous. He went as far as to say that we are at risk of losing a generation of young people if they are not returned to the classroom.

According to data published by UNICEF, more than 1 billion children are at risk of falling behind in school due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Remote learning has served well in some instances as a substitute for classroom learning, but many children, those in the poorest households, do not have access to the internet and devices.

## Colonel Azariel Loria is now BDF Brigadier General

by *Charles Gladden*

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

It was announced back in December of last year by Minister of State in the Ministry of Defence and National Security, Hon. Oscar Mira, that Brigadier General Steven Ortega, Commander of the Belize Defence Force, would be retiring and Deputy Commander Colonel Azariel Loria would be appointed to the vacant post.



*General Azariel Loria, Commander, B.D.F.*

On Friday, January 21, then-Deputy Commander Colonel Azariel Loria was sworn in as the BDF's new Brigadier General. The change of command took place at the commemoration of the forty-fourth anniversary of the Belize Defence Force at the Sir Colville Young Parade Square at Price Barracks.

"I am honored to be with you today to celebrate two significant milestones for the B.D.F. – its forty-fourth anniversary in service to the people of Belize and the change of command from Brigadier General Steven Ortega to Brigadier General Azariel Loria. I am honored, more so that even amidst the military pomp and ceremony, General Loria is fully aware that he is here to serve this nation and to uphold our democratic principles and our values which are rooted in our peaceful, constructive, progressive, and authentic Belizean revolution," said Prime Minister of



# Domestic abuse charges read to Opposition Leader

(From page 1)

*Embattled Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Patrick Faber was taken to court on domestic abuse charges. UDP Chairman, Michael Peyrefitte is calling for his resignation.*

BELIZE CITY, Fri. Jan. 21, 2022

This morning, the embattled Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Patrick Faber, appeared in the Belize City Magistrate’s Court, where two charges were read to him, one of domestic assault against his fiancée, Dr. Shanikka Arnold, and the other for damage to property for the alleged destruction of her laptop. In the presence of Hon. Faber’s two lawyers, Richard “Dickie” Bradley and OJ Elrington, those charges were dropped by Dr. Arnold in a short court proceeding. According to Bradley, the complainant, Arnold, took the witness stand and requested that the court not proceed with the matter. The magistrate overseeing the matter, Baja Shoman, reportedly asked the complainant directly if she was induced by means of either a threat or a bribe to withdraw the charges, and, according to Bradley, there was no indication of any coercion.

Bradley, when interviewed by reporters after the charges were dropped, went on to call the proceedings a farce that should never have happened, and Faber suggested that the manner in which Commissioner of Police, Chester Williams, handled the matter was likely the result of a political directive issued to him by the current administration in an effort to malign his character and put at risk his role as Leader of the Opposition. He said that at no time did the COMPOL reach out to him prior to or following the issuance of the warrant for his arrest, and he emphasized that he was never in hiding from the police. He said that, in fact, the COMPOL has his personal cell number and his WhatsApp number, and that he has oftentimes received messages from the COMPOL conveying good wishes on holidays. His attorneys further noted that there was no formal request for police action in the complaint given to police. In fact, Elrington told local media that the Police Commissioner’s public comments on the matter were both legally wrong and unbecoming of his office.

Elrington said that, in fact, there may be a case for a claim of malicious prosecution against the office of the Commissioner of Police for the statements that he made during the press conference on the matter last week Thursday. He said that the COMPOL’s decision to automatically charge Faber following the complaint without giving him a chance to answer to the allegations against him or without investigating the matter was utterly wrong and amounted to politically puppetry. In addition, Elrington claimed that Williams violated a key ethical principle when he disclosed the content of Arnold’s private statement to the public.

Elrington further argued that, while the COMPOL said his issuance of an arrest warrant was a precautionary measure geared at protecting the perceived victim from future harm, the comments made by Commissioner



**Patrick Faber, Leader of the Opposition and Michael Peyrefitte, UDP Chairman**

Williams actually amounted to a verbal attack against the complainant, since she had allegedly made multiple requests that the contents of her complaint be kept private.

In response to Elrington’s assertions, Commissioner Williams later told local media that there was no political intervention on the part of the PUP to steer his decision-making on the matter. He went on to state that the only way to stop the scourge of domestic violence in our society is to take a hardline approach and to speak out on behalf of victims and act in defense of those persons.

While the most recent allegations of domestic violence are legally behind Faber, he now stares down the barrel of a political rifle brandished by UDP chairman Michael Peyrefitte, who called for his immediate resignation this afternoon.

“Middle of last year, we were here. There was an incident, and I even told the media and the nation that from what we could see, the party leader hit a door, and maybe he was frustrated and angry and going through some issues that we all go through in our personal lives, but it was extreme, in a way, what he did. He said mea culpa, he said he was going to get some help and we all accepted that and said let’s move on. The condition that I had put on the situation was, this could not happen again. Well, it has happened again, and let me be very clear, whether he is guilty or innocent of what was said against him in a statement, that is for a court and a judge to decide. That’s not for me to decide, but my position is that there is too much smoke for there to be no fire,” Peyrefitte stated when interviewed by the press on the matter.

He went on to say that it is in the best interest of the UDP for Faber to resign in order to give the opposition an opportunity to rebuild. Ultimately, while this is Peyrefitte’s personal position, he said that the people of Belize will not tolerate a UDP whose leaders are constantly involved in domestic conflict. Peyrefitte said that he may very well be removed as the lead Opposition senator for his stance, and added that if the UDP chooses to remain under Faber’s leadership, he may have to rethink his allegiance to the party. It is highly unlikely, however,

that Faber will retain the authority he had within the party just a week ago—and Peyrefitte is likely cognizant of that.

Peyrefitte said, “I can’t make the

party leader resign; I can’t make him go. He has to resign of his own volition, and if he doesn’t resign, then I will encourage the national convention to make a move to remove him.”

The elected party leadership within the UDP can only be removed by a majority (two-thirds) of delegates who can trigger a special convention through which that removal can take place. The other option is for the embattled member to resign of his own free will, but a minority group within the party does not hold the power to remove the party leader.

Hon. Patrick Faber is expected to hold a press conference on Monday at the UDP headquarters in Belize City, according to a notice issued by the party late today. We will continue to follow.

## “I feel like Julius Caesar surrounded by 5 Brutus”— Mayor Palacio

*Belmopan mayor Sharon Palacio is fighting back against allegations made by five of her councilors, claiming that they are trying to sabotage her*

by Khaila Gentle

BELMOPAN, Fri. Jan. 21, 2022

City of Belmopan mayor Sheran ‘Sharon’ Palacio took to Plus TV’s *Rise and Shine* morning show last week to address recent allegations made against her by five of her councilors. Those allegations, revealed in a leaked letter signed by the councilors, include mismanagement of funds, lack of transparency, and failure to act in accordance with the Belmopan City Act. Palacio told *Rise and Shine* host Fem Cruz that since the issue between her and her councillors has now been made public, she would gladly speak on it. In response to the allegations, she had the following to say:

“To say that I’m disappointed—I am. I am not shocked, because when it comes to people and their behaviour, you sometimes don’t know what to expect. I think that the approach that they used, I would look at it as sabotage, because I had no idea. Can you imagine? I actually read, just like everybody else, and I heard just like everybody else.”

She pointed out that of all the allegations, the one that stood out to her most was the claim that she handled donation money without first consulting the councilors. The Mayor stated that the councilors are just as guilty. She noted two instances in which they undertook projects without reporting anything to her. One was the Father of the Nation 8K Run held this month and the other was a Christmas event on Ring Road which she knew nothing about until the event was taking place.

“Each and every one of them are



**Belmopan mayor, Sheran ‘Sharon’ Palacio**

out there soliciting funds, doing projects, despite me asking them for us to work on our plan,” she said.

Mayor Palacio has also admonished the media, specifically Love FM, about what she calls “irresponsible journalism.” According to her, the media house failed to reach out to her for comment before reporting on the issue. According to Love FM, however, they did request an interview with her. Mayor Palacio has since taken to social media to voice her discontent both with the media and with her five councillors—or her five Brutuses, as she referred to them.

“Again I publicly condemn the approach used by my councillors. I maintain that my Deputy is the ring leader, and when the truth is told, this entire nation will tremble,” she stated in a Facebook post on Friday.

Mayor Palacio has also stated that she may have been too lenient with her councilors, noting that she was often very tolerant of what she calls their discrepancies. She maintains that almost all of the allegations made against her are false and might be a result of the councilors’ malcontent over some structural changes she made at the Belmopan City Council recently.



## Belize to hand Counter-Memorial to ICJ in June



**Eamon Courtenay –  
Minister of Foreign Affairs**

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Last week, while responding to local reporters' questions at a press conference, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration, Hon. Eamon Courtenay, stated that the lawyer representing Belize at the International Court of Justice (which will in a few years issue a ruling on Guatemala's Territorial, Insular and Maritime

Claim (Guatemala/Belize) to Belizean territory) is in the process of preparing Belize's Counter-Memorial, which will be filed on June 8 of this year, according to Hon. Courtenay. The ICJ had approved an extension to the filing of Guatemala's memorial, following a request on April 8, 2020, from that nation. They cited the COVID-19 crisis as the reason for requesting the 12-month extension, to which the then Barrow administration had objected.

The court ultimately granted a 6-month extension to Guatemala, resulting in a December 2020 deadline, which they met when they officially filed their Memorial to the ICJ. As mentioned, it is now Belize's turn to file its documents, and Hon. Courtenay says we'll do so on time.

"We are preparing the documents, and we will file them on time. There is nothing more," Hon. Courtenay said.

He reminded the media that Belize's government has been ordered by their attorney, and is obliged by the rules

of the court, to be tight-lipped as the process plays out. The parties from Belize, however, have already been notified of the contents of Guatemala's claim, since, according to the 2008 Special Agreement, our Counter-Memorial is to be submitted after we have received the contents of Guatemala's Memorial.

The government of Guatemala will have a chance to submit a Reply within 6 months after the submission of Belize's Counter-Memorial, and Belize is to submit a Rejoinder within the 6-month period following that reply. The court may agree if they so choose, or if both parties agree, to authorize additional pleadings and extend the deadlines for such submissions upon the request of parties, as was done in response to Guatemala's deadline-extension request.

"We are restricted from speaking on this issue by our own attorneys and by the rules of the ICJ, so we are working very diligently on preparing the Counter-Memorial." Hon. Courtenay said.

## Colonel Azariel Loria is now BDF Brigadier General

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Belize, Hon. John Briceño, during an address he delivered at the ceremony.

When Brigadier General Loria addressed those in attendance at the ceremony, he said that under his command the Belize Defence Force will be operating with humility, and ethical and moral values.

"The B.D.F. shall be robust and agile to incorporate new technology, embrace change and develop its human resources and capabilities to contribute to the stability, security, and prosperity of Belize. It is my intent to make good use of the senior leadership in building the team, because it is not about me, but only from the strength and wisdom of the team that we will achieve that dynamism needed to keep improving and moving the force forward," he said.

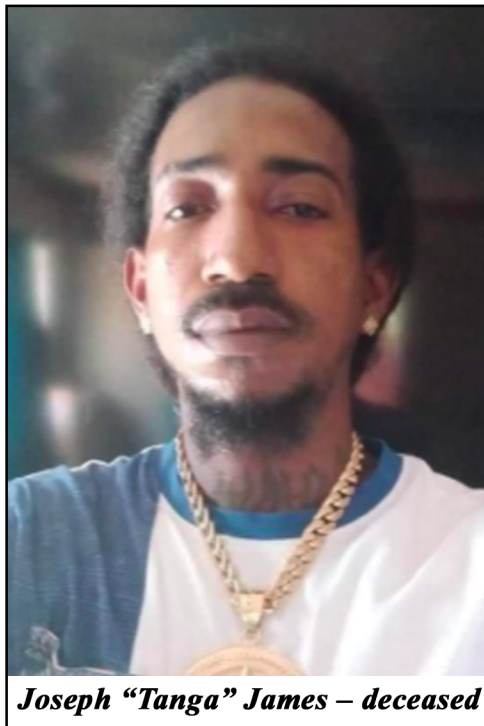
## Tanga executed after leaving court

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Today, the Commissioner of Police, Chester Williams informed local media that several persons are currently being questioned in connection with the murder of Joseph "Tanga" James, 33, which took place on Friday morning in Belize City. James was reportedly driving down Bishop Street along with his girlfriend, Marybeth Wade, 30, when the couple was ambushed by a man standing on the corner of West Collet Canal. Both persons were injured, and James, the driver of the vehicle, drove down West Canal and onto Prince Street before losing control of the vehicle and crashing into a cement fence. When police arrived on the scene, they saw both James and Wade suffering from gunshot injuries and transported them to the KMH.

James was pronounced dead shortly after, and Wade was treated and listed in a stable condition. She later released herself from the hospital and recounted the ordeal to a local reporter. She explained that she was the first of the two to be shot, since the bullets that were fired, entered the vehicle through the passenger side, and James told her to get down. She said she was pressed down to the corner of the passenger-side seat and the bullets that hit Tanga came from her side of the vehicle. She said that one bullet grazed her arm and hit him in the throat, causing him to bleed profusely from that wound.

James was listed as a self-employed resident of Belize City in a police report but is a well-known criminal figure within Belize City. Recently, he was arrested for appearing along with other known criminals in a Facebook live video



**Joseph "Tanga" James – deceased**

in which they were seen brandishing high-caliber firearms. According to Wade, police had detained him on the day prior to his death, and she and attorney Orson Elrington had worked to secure his release, which they succeeded in doing.

Joseph "Tanga" James was reportedly heading home from a morning session at the court, where he was able to avoid the revocation of his bail, which would have resulted in his being taken back to the Belize Central Prison.

Commissioner of Police Chester Williams told local reporters that he has handed down instructions to the National Crime Investigation Branch to follow some leads that could shed further light on the broad daylight murder and possibly lead to the arrest of the triggerman. COMPOL Williams hopes that following those leads could give investigators a clearer picture of the events that led up to the killing of James.

## Construction starts on Placencia polyclinic

*by Charles Gladden*

PLACENCIA, Stann Creek District, Sun. Jan. 23, 2022

A groundbreaking ceremony to mark the start of the construction of a state-of-the-art polyclinic in Placencia village in Stann Creek was held this week.

The 5,650-square-foot polyclinic will include consultation rooms, reception and registration areas, waiting rooms, an asthma bay, pharmacy, 2 triage rooms, a laboratory, shock/trauma rooms, and more, in order to be able to provide the highest level of service to patients.

The Placencia Village Council provided the land for the construction of the facility while the technical requirements, staff and management of the polyclinic are being provided by the Ministry of Health and Wellness (MOHW); and the Belize Tourism Board (BTB) developed the terms of reference for the tendering procedures connected with construction of the facility and will manage the

disbursement of funds, with guidance from MOHW.

"The Placencia Polyclinic will not only provide essential health services to Placencia residents

during this critical juncture for the country but also continue to contribute to the development of

Placencia as a healthy, safe, and visitor-friendly destination." said Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations, Hon. Anthony Mahler.

"This project will provide not only superior healthcare to our people, but will increase the attractiveness of these destinations to tourists, resulting in benefit to these communities and to the nation," said Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health and Wellness, as he emphasized the critical importance of collaboration between government, municipalities, and private entities in projects that will provide beneficial impacts to local communities.

The project is estimated to cost \$2.49 million dollars, which will be obtained through the Tourism Development Fund that was established for the destination.



**Placencia polyclinic groundbreaking**





# National issues, but LEO's personal life causes distractions

Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

There are some burning national issues for the just over one-year-old John Briceno-led PUP government administration to deal with, but perhaps fortunate for government, and unfortunate for the Belizean people, the Opposition party is somewhat unstable right now, severely distracted by the prospect of a possible change of leadership because of the recent domestic troubles of Opposition/UDP leader, Hon. Patrick Faber, that initially led to a police warrant for his arrest. Latest reports are that the female complainant has rescinded her statement, and so the charges have reportedly been dismissed; but the political damage has already been done, this being not the first or the second domestic violence incident that Faber has been involved in over the past decade. Faber has reportedly announced a press conference for Monday, but the UDP Chairman, Senator Michael Peyrefitte, has publicly stated his position that Faber needs to step down as Leader of the Opposition and of the UDP.

It is not as if our country does not have many important issues affecting the lives of citizens to deal with. There are a host of crucial matters that should demand the attention and focus of the party in Opposition, from the waterfront situation, to crime and violence, health issues, the immigration problem, schools and border re-opening concerns, etc. Instead, citizens are to be treated to pleas for mercy, and "never again" promises from the would-be leader of the country in efforts to hold on to his posts as leader of the Opposition and the UDP.

Meanwhile, a ticking time bomb is the unresolved stevedore issue at the Port of Belize, where there was talk late last week that government was considering sending in BDF personnel to replace

striking waterfront workers in unloading cargo from a ship. There are a lot of guns in the streets of Belize, and many citizens experiencing hard times; it is not the kind of climate in which any government would want to aggravate a situation where a significant group of workers feel their backs may be against a wall, and may be willing to risk it all in defending what they perceive as their right under the labor laws of Belize; and their plight could easily ignite other sympathetic forces in the community, and one thing could lead to another. Crime and violence continue to be a major problem, with our New Year murder rate already approaching record levels, and things could quickly deteriorate to another level.

The situation with the cañeros up north may seem to have been resolved for now, but there are still a few wrinkles to be ironed out between BSI/ASR and the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association. And it may not be long before the pounding of an unprecedented number of sugar-loaded trucks begins taking its toll on the just-being-improved surface of the Philip Goldson Highway, as well as the George Price Highway and the Hummingbird Highway on the way to the Big Creek port, along with the inevitable increase in road accidents. The BSI/ASR savings in transportation costs

will not only come out of the pockets of our stevedore workers, but the taxpaying Belizean citizens overall will foot the bill for the increased damage endured by our highway surfaces from such intense heavy-load traffic. Moreover, our caneros will soon find out how long their truck tires last on this much longer journey; and then there will be more "talks" with BSI/ASR.

The new annual budget is around the corner in March, and with the recent glowing reports by the IMF on government's fiscal performance over the past year, public service workers will be looking forward to some relief from their lost wages due to the 10% salary cut endured last year. Tourism is slowly coming back, and agriculture is on the move, but it is left to be seen how much government is willing to release to public officers at this time.

Then there is the question being posed to P.M. Briceno by Senator Peyrefitte on the \$15 million approved by the National Assembly towards payment of consultancy fees in the closing of the Super Bond and implementation of the Blue Bonds. The senator wants more details on the cash disbursement, the timing thereof, implying that more transparency is needed, while the P.M. appears to be stalling, saying he has already provided all the details. The Financial Secretary has since issued a release in which he certified that "the BZD\$15 million supplementary Budget provision ... will NOT be allocated nor de-reserved by the Ministry of Finance, since it is no longer required," but Peyrefitte says he is determined to pursue the matter in court; and this is the sort of thing that an Opposition is to expend its energies on, in being a watch-dog for the people's affairs.

And there is also the redistricting case that government is again showing little enthusiasm towards; and the Opposition is needed to impress the urgency of this exercise, especially in light of the proposed amnesty to upwards of 40,000 undocumented immigrants, another matter that requires discussion and debate. And what about the voting rights of our diaspora Belizeans?

There are enough heavy matters to consume the attention and focus of an earnest Opposition party, to press the current office holders in government to give maximum service and attention to the needs and concerns of the Belizean people. The Briceno-led government has some feathers in its cap; for example, he has recently indicated that the proposed legislation drafted by the previous Auditor General has been passed to the current Attorney General for review, and also that the office of Ombudsman would soon be advertised. But it is the consistent pressure from an engaged Opposition that will ensure that the people get the best performance from government.

How this latest fiasco plays out is a UDP party affair, but it also is of concern to all Belizeans because the Leader of the Opposition holds an important constitutional post. Mr. Faber may wish to brush the matter aside as a trivial and private incident that got blown out of proportion. But his erstwhile party leader and prime minister would be the first to advise him that the "optics" are important. For his part, the UDP Chairman and Senator, Hon. Michael Peyrefitte has seen enough and thrown down the gauntlet.

In a statement last week on 7News, Peyrefitte said: "I can't make the party leader resign, I can't make him go. He has to resign of his own volition, and if he doesn't resign, then I will encourage the national convention to make a move to remove him. And if the U.D.P. decides that the honorable Patrick Faber is to be their leader and that's the leader they're sticking with, given all these circumstances, then the U.D.P. is not an organization that I think I want to be a part of..."

Meanwhile, Faber is giving no indication of voluntarily stepping down. Responding to a question from a reporter he said simply, "You know that I am a fighter, and you know that I will keep going."

Come Monday, there will likely be more political theatre, with curious eyes watching to see if Patrick is some sort of political Houdini, or if it turns out to be a case of the proverbial bucket to the well. Whichever, the quicker it is over, the better for the Belizean people so that the Opposition party can get back to performing its important constitutional duties in our governance process.

Solidarity for our stevedores!



(estb. 1969)

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# Youth in Engineering

Engineering is an exciting field of work; however, the industry has an ever-aging workforce that needs to be replaced and is currently offset by an acute shortage of skilled young engineers capable of filling the roles that are being made available. To ensure that Belize will have enough young engineers for future sustainable development, it is necessary to encourage and inspire youths to take on contemporary challenges. The way to achieve this is by increasing the number of students studying engineering at the tertiary level so as to maintain and improve the socio-economic development of our society. The University of Belize currently offers three Associate degree programs, namely, Mechanical-Electrical Engineering, Building Civil Engineering, and Architectural Technology. UB's Engineering Department will offer its first Bachelor of Technology degree program in Construction in August 2022. The course will provide youths with opportunities to advance their interests in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

With a shift in the way the industry works, now is an ideal time for young people to fill the skills gap, particularly since the industry is being modernized and greater emphasis is being placed on replacing laborers with technology and efficient

working practices. The issue that many engineering companies are faced with at the moment is a severe lack of skilled young workers applying for vacant roles. While young people may be applying for these vacancies, they simply don't have the relevant skills or experience to succeed without significant and sustained levels of training.

It's fair to say that steps have been taken in recent years to try and address this obvious need, but more must be done if the industry is to grow with qualified, young engineers at the helm. One such step is the Associate degree programs at the University of Belize which help students to transition from academic life to the construction industry or the mechanical-electrical industry. They complete the course as technicians prepared to take on complex roles in the workplace, from architectural designs and drawings in the architectural technology program to construction supervision and site management in the building civil engineering program. Students in the mechanical-electrical program are



prepared to take on industry-related tasks such as servicing, operating, managing, and designing basic mechanical and/or electrical systems.

One of the underlying reasons for this shortage of skilled young engineers comes from the fact that students are simply not encouraged to pursue a career in STEM subjects early enough. The truth is that many students do not get exposed to engineering and technology-related subjects until they get to third and fourth forms. By the time they reach sixteen years of age, the appeal of taking up a profession in this field has already been lost. So what can be done? Young people need to be encouraged to participate in vital training that is necessary within the engineering sector. Each of the programs being offered by the university entails a month-long internship. These placements are developed through close relationships between the Engineering Department and industry stakeholders, including various architectural firms and construction companies. Via practicum, students get an opportunity to observe and participate in projects that are undertaken by Thurton & Thurton Associates, International Environments, Maheia's Construction, M&M Engineering Ltd., and Young's Engineering. Mechanical-electrical engineering students often intern at Belize Electricity Ltd., ASR/BSI, and Santander.

It is important for children to gain a comprehensive education; however, introducing apprenticeships from an earlier age is a possible solution for the shortage of suitable engineering candidates. An apprenticeship during the freshman year of high school, for a semester or more, can help a student develop the basic skills needed to make it in the industry. This is in line with the idea that teachers, parents, and employers must do more to feature modern engineering workplace functions. Educators must also understand how to get young women into engineering. A new approach has to be devised and employed when trying to encourage young women to enroll in the engineering curriculum. While future salary expectations have been one of the key selling points engineering companies use to entice young people into a career in the field, that approach just isn't an effective tactic to engage young women. Instead, they should be encouraged by the prospect of simply having an interesting job.

Companies, as well as schools and colleges, can explore myriad ways to encourage young people to get into the engineering industry in the years ahead. It is fair to say that if more young people cannot be persuaded into a career in engineering from an earlier age, the future of the industry will remain uncertain. Fortunately, there is still time to address this issue before things become unsustainable.

## 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
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Send your resume with two letters of recommendation to:

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**Deadline for applications is Monday, February 1, 2022.**

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

**Position Name:** Maintenance Mechanic (Generator Mechanic)  
**Vacancy number:** Belmopan-2022-02  
**Closing date:** January 28, 2022

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

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

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

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



# Briceño can top Mottley and redeem George

by Colin Hyde

Well, well, Ms. Mia Mottley, Barbados's George Price, swept all 30 seats in a snap general election she called the other day. The opposition there said the turnout for the election was poor. Reports are that 5,000 people were disallowed from voting because they had Covid, and I guess others who didn't vote stayed away because they were afraid of getting infected. Mia has all kinds of explanations for why she called the elections about a year and a half early, but we'll forget that, I'm thinking here about our John Briceño and his PUP, what they can do to top her, and redeem George.

Topping Mia would be cool. Barbados only has 30 seats, we have 31, and with the UDP in total disarray, a snap election now would be a wipeout. She is so much like George Price it wouldn't be surprising if she emulated him, and she has feathers in her cap: one the clean sweep, something never done by Price; two, a snap election victory more than a year early; and three, she divorced the Queen, something Price drooled to do but only could get himself

charged with sedition for.

The bio says Mia has no children, and there's no mention of a man in her life. Hmm, George had no children, but he being a man, we can't be certain he didn't sire any. We know that our George never married because there are public records of such alliances. Of course I'm not questioning how those guys live/d their lives. I hear our Pope has said that people who don't have children are selfish, but I don't know if that arrow was aimed at people who choose to live like Paul the Apostle.

The LGBT news medium in San Francisco, *Bay Area Reporter* (BAR), reporting on Mottley's general election victory in 2018, said she "won despite a homophobic smear campaign in which the ruling Democratic Labour Party questioned her sexual orientation." BAR said same-sex business is illegal in Barbados, that gays in that country face a lot of discrimination, and that a conviction for the act could lead to life in prison. I think that last part must be a daam lie.

BAR said it was a platform of Mottley's BLP to call for a

referendum on gay matters, but members of the party said 'not so' after that election. According to BAR, Hon. Cynthia Forde told reporters "the BLP would not pursue any 'gay agenda'" because "nobody in the Barbados Labour Party is interested in any same-sex marriage."

Every male in our country who remains single for too long – we let our women be, we always have – yap, any single male has to answer questions, and our Price got his share of scrutiny. Price had a number of LGBT friends in his entourage, but that doesn't say he was partial, because as long as one voted PUP, there was space, special privileges in his tent for you. Is it true that man said a politician exists to win elections? The history books say he was as popular as Mia. The people said if he ran a mule we would have had braying in the House.

Some in her country have scolded Mottley for divorcing the Queen; they say she rammed through her agenda without allowing for meaningful consultations. Hmm, we know how our George wished he could have done the same. Aha, if you want to know about the mischief Price did, go read a book called, *The Man in Khaki*. There you will learn how nearly he, if not for a very loyal friend and the love of the people, came to being a guest at Her Majesty's Prison. And the rest, they say, is history.

My, it must be some temptation for Briceño to whitewash the crumbling UDP. Forget the ridiculous math of calling an election with FOUR years left on the PUP mandate. An opportunity to accomplish so much does not come in every politician's lifetime.

It's history that Price, the master politician, saw the UDP in shambles in 1993, split down the middle over the Maritime Areas Act, and he dissolved the House early, to finish them off. But the winds shifted quickly, and the sure thing melted away. Many people much more respected in the political world than I, have offered explanations for the massive shock at the polls in 1993. Clearly, a free tuition promise by the UDP, and a surprise announcement of a British pullout, maybe a "gift" from the Queen to punish George for some of his past mischief, were key factors, but humbly I say the key to that election defeat of the PUP was the *Godwin Hulse Tuesday Night Show* on the newly minted Krem Radio.

The PUP had unleashed Ralph Fonseca and his first growth economics philosophy, and John D'rectly would say that man was Henry, spending money like ih kyaahn done. The PUP should never have given Ralph the big job. We all know how he got it. Ralph's father, Rafael,

had earned a lot of respect for his handling of the nation's purse during the 1970s, and it's on his dad's laurels that Ralph got the chance to do weh ih want with the nation's business. My, how we in Belize always di get head tek.

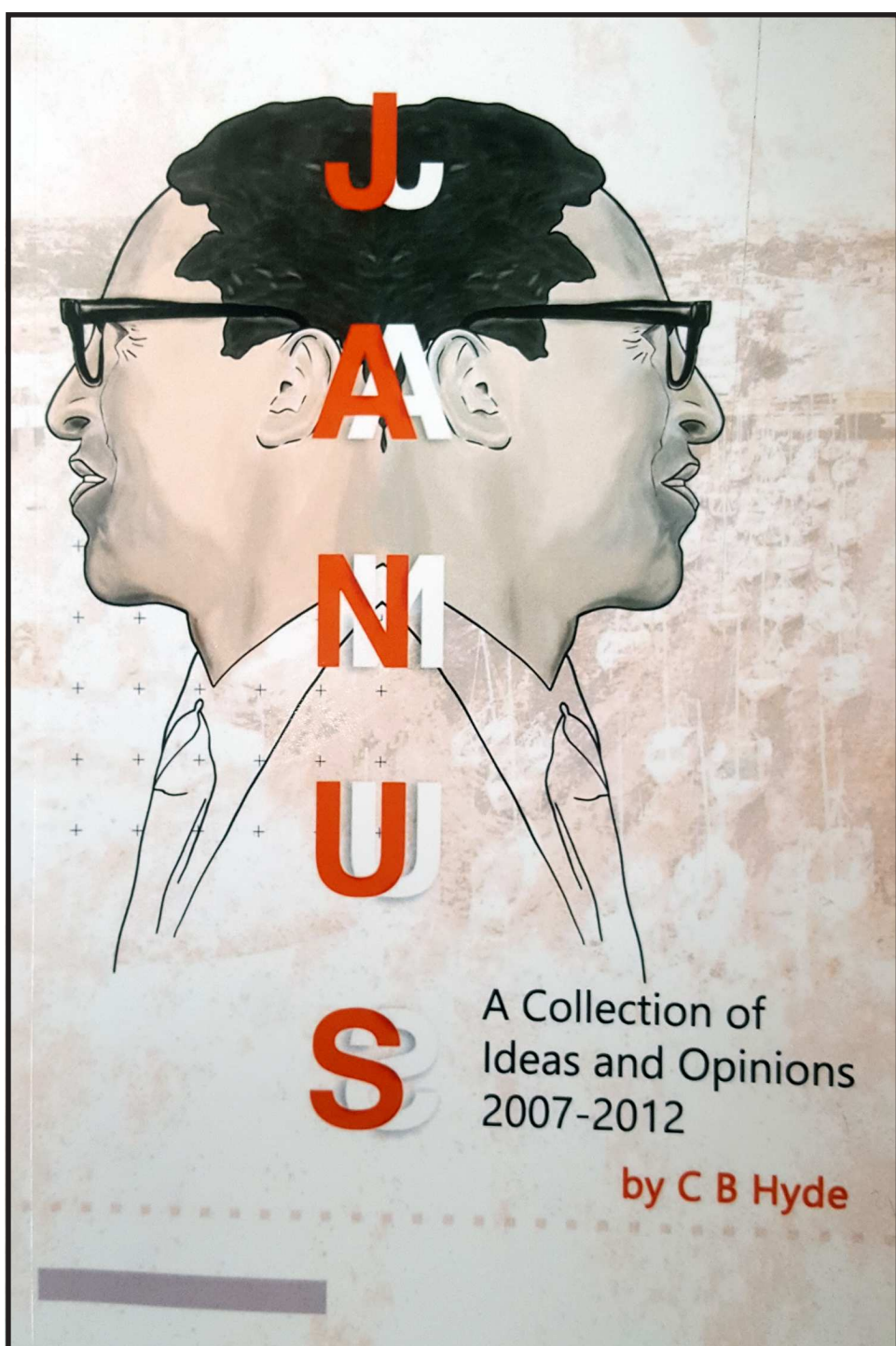
Now, allow me to tell you about bulldogs. If you don't remember Jack London's classic, "White Fang", well, White Fang was a hero fighting dog, and as we all know, every bully got ih kecha. When White Fang met his, it was a bulldog that grabbed him by the jowl on his neck and refused to let go.

One bulldog is bad enough; two on the same show was the worst news for the PUP. Godwin's co-host on Tuesday nights was *Amandala* editor, Russell Vellos, and there you have the definition of tenacity. The PUP, with Ralph at the helm, had engineered the Italian projects, and it was obvious to all that we weren't getting value for money and, to compound the felony, the funds came from commercial borrowing, something Albert Einstein warned about. Godwin and Vellos sank their teeth into those bloated projects, and it was not until the results of the 1993 election were in, and the PUP had been booted out, that they let go.

It's a blot on the PUP record, what happened to them in 1993. In a shocking moment of madness, they reportedly tried to bribe two UDPees to defect. They had had success with this type of skullduggery before, getting Vicente Choco and Stanley Usher to cross the floor, but not for the kind of prize that was up in 1993, the control of our National Assembly. It's no consolation that in the big USA they had a somewhat similar attack on democracy in 2020. I really wish you'd pay a little attention to me when I tell you things. I told you the US was once just a lee British colony, jos like we.

I have no doubt you and your gang are thinking about it, John. Oh sorry, I should call you, Johnny. That other one who shares your first name still can't apologize for his terrible associations. Bah, he says that even if he messed up, it was for a good cause, buying boots and other gear for his teams. Think on it. If you called it, that other John is bold enough to run again. Maybe Belmopan didn't speak loud enough: Braa, you got to wear the sackcloth.

There's a heck of a lot in the plot. For braata, remember when Red Dean one-upped Blue George with his own snap election and won convincingly with the aid of the Good Samaritan? FOUR years early will make everyone forget that. My, it would be sweet revenge for the 1993 debacle and, the final icing, 31-30 Briceño over Mia.







## Asuntos nacionales, pero la vida personal del Líder de la Oposición genera distracciones

Lun. 24 de enero de 2022

Hay algunos temas candentes a nivel nacional que la administración gubernamental del PUP dirigida por John Briceno, de poco más de un año de edad, debe abordar, pero tal vez afortunadamente para el gobierno y desafortunadamente para el pueblo beliceño, el partido de la oposición está algo inestable en este momento, gravemente distraído por la perspectiva de un posible cambio de liderazgo debido a los recientes problemas domésticos del líder de la Oposición/UDP, el Honorable Patrick Faber, que inicialmente llevó a una orden policial para su arresto. Los informes más recientes indican que la denunciante ha rescindido su declaración, por lo que, según los informes, se han desestimado los cargos; pero el daño político ya está hecho, siendo este no el primer ni el segundo incidente de violencia doméstica en el que Faber ha estado involucrado durante la última década. Según los informes, Faber ha anunciado una conferencia de prensa para el lunes, pero el presidente del UDP, el senador Michael Peyrefitte, ha declarado públicamente su posición de que Faber debe renunciar como líder de la oposición y del UDP.

No es que nuestro país no tenga que abordar muchos temas importantes que afectan la vida de los ciudadanos. Hay una serie de asuntos cruciales que deberían exigir la atención y el enfoque del partido de la Oposición, desde la situación con los estibadores hasta el crimen y la violencia, los problemas de salud, el problema de la inmigración, las preocupaciones sobre la reapertura de las escuelas y las fronteras, etc. En cambio, los ciudadanos deben ser tratados con súplicas de clemencia y promesas de "nunca más" del aspirante a líder del país en un esfuerzo por aferrarse a sus puestos como líder de la Oposición y del UDP.

Mientras tanto, una bomba de tiempo es el problema no resuelto de los estibadores en Port of Belize, donde a fines de la semana pasada se habló de que el gobierno estaba considerando enviar personal de la Fuerza de Defensa de Belize para reemplazar a los trabajadores de la zona costera en huelga en la descarga de un barco. Hay muchas armas en las calles de Belize y muchos ciudadanos pasando por momentos difíciles; no es el tipo de clima en el que cualquier gobierno querría agravar una situación en la que un grupo significativo de trabajadores siente que sus espaldas pueden estar contra la pared, y pueden estar dispuestos a arriesgarlo todo para defender lo que perciben como su derecho bajo las leyes laborales de Belize; y su difícil situación fácilmente podría encender otras fuerzas simpatizantes en la comunidad, y una cosa podría llevar a la otra. El crimen y la violencia continúan siendo un problema importante, con nuestra tasa de asesinatos del Año Nuevo que ya se acerca a niveles récord, y las cosas podrían deteriorarse rápidamente a otro nivel.

La situación con los cañeros en el norte parece haber sido resuelta por ahora, pero aún quedan algunas arrugas por resolver entre BSI/ASR y la Asociación de Agricultores de Caña de Azúcar de Belize. Y es posible que no pase mucho tiempo antes de que el aporreo de un número sin precedentes de camiones cargados de azúcar comience a pasar factura en la superficie de la Carretera Philip Goldson, que acaba de ser mejorada, así como en la Carretera George Price y la autopista Hummingbird en el camino al puerto de Big Creek, junto con el inevitable aumento de los accidentes de tráfico. Los ahorros de BSI/ASR en los costos de transporte no solo saldrán de los bolsillos de nuestros trabajadores estibadores, sino que los ciudadanos beliceños contribuyentes en general pagarán la factura del mayor daño sufrido por las superficies de nuestras carreteras debido a un tráfico de carga tan intenso. Además, nuestros cañeros pronto sabrán cuánto duran las llantas de sus camiones en este viaje mucho más largo; y luego habrá más "conversaciones" con BSI/ASR.

El nuevo presupuesto anual está a la vuelta de la esquina en marzo, y con los recientes informes entusiastas del FMI sobre el desempeño fiscal del gobierno durante el año pasado, los

trabajadores del servicio público esperan algún alivio de sus salarios perdidos debido al recorte salarial del 10% que soportaron el año pasado. El turismo está regresando lentamente y la agricultura está en movimiento, pero queda por ver cuánto está dispuesto el gobierno a liberar a los funcionarios públicos en este momento.

Luego está la pregunta que le hace a P.M. Briceno el Senador Peyrefitte sobre los \$15 millones aprobados por la Asamblea Nacional para el pago de honorarios de consultoría en el cierre del Super Bono e implementación de los Bonos Azules. El senador quiere más detalles sobre el desembolso de efectivo, el momento del mismo, lo que implica que se necesita más transparencia, mientras que el P.M. parece estar retrasando, diciendo que ya ha proporcionado todos los detalles. Desde entonces, el Secretario de Finanzas emitió un comunicado en el que certificó que "la provisión presupuestaria suplementaria de BZD \$ 15 millones... NO será asignada ni cancelada por el Ministerio de Finanzas, ya que ya no es necesaria", pero Peyrefitte dice que está decidido proseguir el asunto en los tribunales; y este es el tipo de cosas en las que una Oposición debe gastar sus energías, siendo un perro guardián de los asuntos del pueblo.

Y también está el caso de redistribución de distritos por el que el gobierno nuevamente muestra poco entusiasmo; y se necesita a la Oposición para impresionar la urgencia de este ejercicio, especialmente a la luz de la amnistía propuesta a más de 40,000 inmigrantes indocumentados, otro asunto que requiere discusión y debate. ¿Y qué pasa con los derechos de voto de nuestros beliceños de la diáspora?

Hay suficientes asuntos pesados ??para consumir la atención y el enfoque de un serio partido de la oposición, para presionar a los actuales titulares de cargos en el gobierno para que brinden el máximo servicio y atención a las necesidades y preocupaciones del pueblo beliceño. El gobierno liderado por Briceno tiene algunas plumas en su gorra; por ejemplo, recientemente ha indicado que el proyecto de ley redactado por la anterior Auditora General ha sido pasado a la actual Fiscal General para su revisión, y también que la oficina del Defensor del Pueblo pronto sería anunciada. Pero es la presión constante de una Oposición comprometida lo que asegurará que la gente obtenga el mejor desempeño del gobierno.

La forma en que se desarrolla este último fiasco es un asunto del partido UDP, pero también preocupa a todos los beliceños porque el líder de la oposición ocupa un cargo constitucional importante. El Sr. Faber puede querer dejar el asunto a un lado como un incidente trivial y privado que se salió de proporción. Pero su previo líder del partido y primer ministro sería el primero en advertirle que la "óptica" es importante. Por su parte, el Presidente y Senador UDP, el Honorable Michael Peyrefitte ha visto suficiente y ha tirado el guante.

En una declaración la semana pasada en 7News, Peyrefitte dijo: "No puedo hacer que el líder del partido renuncie, no puedo hacer que se vaya. Tiene que renunciar por su propia voluntad, y si no renuncia, voy a alentar a la convención nacional a tomar cartas en el asunto para destituirlo. Y si el UDP decide que el honorable Patrick Faber será su líder y ese es el líder con el que se quedan, dadas todas estas circunstancias, entonces no creo que el UDP es una organización de la cual quiero ser parte..."

Mientras tanto, Faber no da indicios de renunciar voluntariamente. Respondiendo a una pregunta de un reportero, dijo simplemente: "Sabes que soy un luchador y sabes que seguiré adelante".

El lunes, probablemente habrá más teatro político, con ojos curiosos mirando para ver si Patrick es una especie de Houdini político, o si resulta ser un caso proverbial del balde al pozo. Cualquiera que sea, cuanto antes termine, mejor para el pueblo beliceño para que el partido de la oposición pueda volver a cumplir con sus importantes deberes constitucionales en nuestro proceso de gobierno.

¡Solidaridad para nuestros estibadores!





by Wellington C. Ramos

# BARBADOS PRIME MINISTER MIA MOTLEY — A ROLE MODEL FOR FUTURE WOMEN POLITICAL LEADERS IN BARBADOS AND THE WORLD

seats when they won a landslide in 2018. Barbados’ government, like those in most former British colonies, serves for five years, so the election was due in 2023.

Even though the term of governments in those countries lasts for five years, there is a “Vote of No Confidence Clause” in most of their constitutions. Under this provision, any member of parliament can table a Vote of No Confidence to call an early election if he or she thinks that the citizens of his country have lost total confidence in the sitting government. Many political parties in the English-speaking Caribbean have used this provision to call early elections with the intent to win and take over their country’s government before, but most of them have failed.

This clause was adopted from their mother country, Great Britain, and it has been used successfully by the British political parties on several occasions. Currently, there is a debate in the British Parliament to get rid of the current British prime minister, Boris Johnson, for having a cocktail party despite the Covid-19 restrictions.

Before this election was held, many

people were wondering why Prime Minister Mia Mottley take this risk to call early elections, when she just made a controversial decision to make her country a Parliamentary Republic. The opposition party was against the idea due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and they took a case to the Barbados Supreme Court to try and stop the election from proceeding, but the court did not grant them their injunction request. When all the votes were counted, she and her party won all 30 seats.

The challenges facing Barbados and all the countries in the world today with this Covid-19 pandemic are severe. The economies of most countries, including the industrialized nations of the world, are all impacted by this virus. The underdeveloped countries are suffering more due to their lack of financial resources and



Prime Minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley

medical technology. They are looking to the industrialized nations for assistance.

Prime Minister Mia Mottley has guts, or like we say in Belize, she have “gaall,” because she is willing to take on the challenges despite the odds. Many people would choose to walk away or just give it up. This is a true demonstration of a leader’s love for her people and nation.

The citizens have confidence in her, and that is why they voted for her and her Barbados Labor Party (BLP). Elections are now gone, and the Barbadian people have spoken.

## Belizean identity?

Losing one’s identity has to be one of the most distressing, most life-changing experiences you could ever go through. To find out that your name, your credit, everything you worked so hard for, has been taken away from you, has been lost! Now, imagine a country losing its identity. Impossible? Unimaginable? A couple of weeks ago, I wrote a kind of tongue-in-cheek column about Belize in the future. At that time, I believed that the government was accepting 40 to 60 thousand more refugees into the country. I didn’t realize that they were already here, for decades, in some cases, and that the government is now considering granting them citizenship status! So the situation is even more dire than I first suspected. I think I mentioned in the last column that these people all have relatives in their countries of origin, who will gladly and quickly follow them here! To them, Belize is paradise, compared to some of the hell holes that they are presently living in! There has to be

a referendum on such a drastic decision! I don’t think that this situation was on the mind of voters in the last election!

I don’t think that any country, especially in modern times, has lost its identity or has had its population overrun and displaced by foreign immigration. The Germans tried to annex Czechoslovak to build their Sudetenland, to populate the country with a majority German population. As powerful as they were, they failed. This was during WW2, and it was aggression in its fullest form. Here in Belize, it’s a peaceful, almost undetectable invasion, in slow motion.

This should not only be of concern to black Belizeans, it should concern all of us. All of our cultures, whether Mayan, Creole, Mestizo, Garifuna, East Indian, will be affected by this anomaly! Every single one of us, regardless of how much we think that we’ll be safe. It will affect our languages, our food, our music, our political system, everything!

Majority rules, and we will have to adapt to their way of life, and believe me, there’s a huge difference there! Cuttobrut, tableta, stretch mi guts, duckunu, rice and beans, will start disappearing as the demand lessens; our music, our heroes, our way of life, will all become unrecognizable! I included our favorite sweets for effect, but you get my drift.

This is just a bleak, dark, dystopian vision, my vision, of what lies ahead for the precious Jewel. A lot of us won’t be around anymore to witness the disturbing phenomena, the subjugation, and disappearance of a

once proud, happy, people! Land redistribution will be right there on top of the list! If you don’t own land, you are powerless! We have no Laocoon or Cassandra to warn us of this impending disaster! We are seeing it unfold as I speak, before our very eyes, slowly and inexorably, and remain silent. Wake up, Belize!

“Breathes there a man with soul so dead, who never to himself hath said,

This is my own, my native land?”— Sir Walter Scott on patriotism.

Glen

### **KREM PHONES:**

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### **BELIZEINTERNATIONAL BUSINESS COMPANIES, CAP. 270 (THE “ACT”) LV INVESTMENTS LTD – In Liquidation, IBC 80,249 (the “Company”)**

Notice is hereby given that the Company commenced liquidation on 23 December 2021 and Nigel Massicot of Sage Corporate Consultants Limited, PO Box 762, Fish Bay, Tortola, British Virgin Islands, VG1110, was appointed as voluntary liquidator. Creditors of the Company are invited to lodge particulars of their claims **no later than 15 February 2022** with the liquidator by email: [management@sagebvi.com](mailto:management@sagebvi.com).

Nigel Massicot,  
Liquidator



# REGIONAL & INTERNATIONAL

## Mexico violence: Third journalist killed this year

A Mexican journalist has been shot dead in the northern border city of Tijuana, officials say, the third journalist to be killed in the country this year



Lourdes Maldonado López

was not clear and no-one has been arrested.

During a news conference in 2019, Maldonado asked President Andrés Manuel López Obrador for his “support, help and labour justice” because, she said, “I fear for my life”.

She was referring to a labour dispute with Jaime Bonilla, who was elected governor of Baja California state later that year as a candidate from the president’s Morena party. Mr Bonilla, who left office late last year, owns the PSN media outlet,

which had employed Maldonado.

Maldonado had sued the company for unfair dismissal and, last week, said she had won the lawsuit after a nine-year legal battle. Mr Bonilla and PSN have not commented.

Rights group Article 19 said she had previously been attacked because of her work and was registered in the Mexican government’s programme to protect journalists.

The campaign group Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said it was “shocked” by the murder.

The killing came six days after photojournalist Margarito Martínez was shot dead outside his home in Tijuana. He covered crime in the city, with his work appearing in national and foreign media.

A week earlier, José Luis Gamboa Arenas was found dead with stab wounds in the eastern city of Veracruz. An editor at the Inforegio and La Noticia news websites, he often wrote articles about organised crime and violence.

Exact numbers of victims are hard to come by as investigations often get

nowhere, and different studies apply different criteria in counting the dead.

According to Article 19, 24 journalists were killed between December 2018, when President López Obrador took office, and the end of 2021.

First published by BBC News

TIJUANA, Mexico, Mon. Jan 24, 2022 (BBC news)

Lourdes Maldonado López, who had decades of experience, was attacked in her car as she arrived home on Sunday.

She had previously said she feared for her life, and was enrolled in a scheme to protect journalists, activists said.

The country is one of the world’s most dangerous for journalists, and dozens have been killed in recent years.

Many of those targeted covered corruption or powerful drug cartels. Campaigners say the killings are rarely fully investigated, with impunity virtually the norm.

The motive for Maldonado’s killing

## Burkina Faso army says it has deposed President Kabore

Mutinuous soldiers say on state television they have suspended the constitution and dissolved the government.

Mon. Jan. 24, 2022 (Al Jazeera)

Burkina Faso’s army said it has deposed President Roch Kabore, suspended the constitution, dissolved the government and the national assembly, and closed the borders.

The announcement, signed on Monday by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba and read by another officer on state television, said that the takeover had been carried out without violence and those detained were in a secure location.

Captain Sidsore Kaber Ouedraogo said that the Patriotic Movement for Safeguard and Restoration would work to establish a calendar



Roch Marc Christian Kaboré – President, Burkina Faso

“acceptable to everyone” for holding new elections without giving further details.

First published by Al Jazeera

# Health & NUTRITION

## Infographic: Endemic vs pandemic diseases

The WHO has said calls to treat the coronavirus as endemic are premature as cases in parts of the world remain high

by Mohammed Haddad

24 Jan 2022 (AL JAZEERA)

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic – a new disease that has spread around the world, affecting a large number of people.

The term pandemic comes from the Greek word “pan” meaning “all” and “demos” meaning “people”.

In comparison, an endemic – with the prefix en- meaning “in or within”- is the constant presence of a disease within a region, making its spread more predictable.

Many experts expect COVID-19 will not be eradicated, and the disease will become endemic and stay with us, in a milder form.

While the conditions to reclassify COVID-19 as endemic are not precisely defined, many countries – particularly in Europe – have begun lifting restrictions as they move towards living with the disease.

Last week, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called on European officials to treat COVID-19 as endemic due to falling death rates.

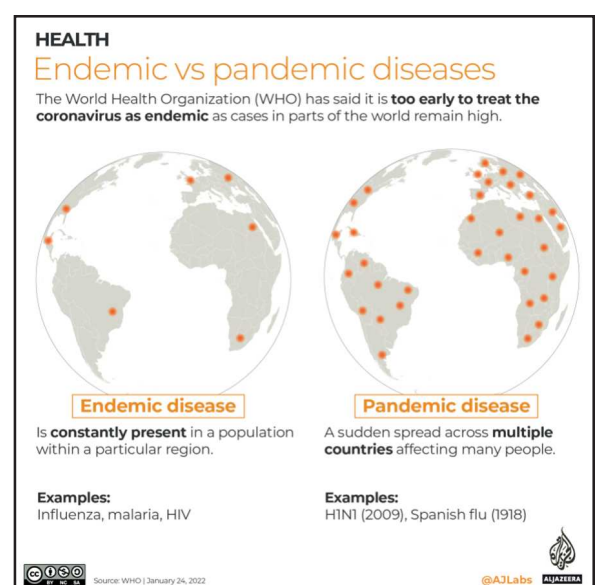
Classifying COVID-19 as such could mean that fewer resources would be allocated to combat the

disease and people would be subject to less testing as it would likely no longer be considered a severe public health emergency.

But the World Health Organization (WHO) has said it is too early to treat the coronavirus as endemic as cases in parts of the world remain high.

Comparing endemic diseases

Endemic diseases are all around us, from the common



Please turn to Page 12



# Cayo man killed in hit-and-run accident



by Khaila Gentle

CAMALOTE, Cayo District, Sat. Jan. 22, 2022

A road traffic accident in Camalote Village claimed the life of one man on Saturday. According to police reports, 50-year-old Camalote resident Francisco Ho was riding along the George Price Highway when, somewhere between Miles 51 and 52, a white SUV traveling from San Ignacio to Belmopan knocked him off his bike and then sped from the scene. Upon arriving at the scene just before 6:30 p.m., police discovered Ho lying motionless on the left side of the road. He was transported to the Western Regional

Hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival.

Ho had been leaving his family home when he was hit. And according to Ferdit Olmedo, a friend of Ho who is also a resident of Camalote, the

accident happened just a few yards away from the pedestrian ramp, making Ho's death all the more tragic.

Marciano Ho, the younger brother of the deceased, said that Francisco was a kind person, willing to assist anyone in the village with their errands. Both men told the media that Ho would be missed by many. A host of his family members and friends have come together to assist with preparations for his wake and funeral, including the construction of his grave.

Marciano Ho is pleading to anyone with information regarding the hit-and-run accident to come forward and report it to the police to help with the ongoing investigation.

# Another execution at Matilda's Mini Mart

Fresh Pond Community resident and owner of Matilda's Mini Mart fatally shot

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

In early November of last year, a double murder occurred at Matilda's Mini Mart in Burrell Boom Village. The two victims were handyman Dennis Brown, 27, and co-worker, Kendra Miguel, 21, both of whom were employees of the establishment. When police arrived at the scene, they found the two workers' motionless bodies.

Initial reports indicated that both employees were at their workplace when a gunman arrived on a motorcycle, entered the establishment, and fired several fatal shots at them, and then made good his escape.

That was almost two months ago. On Friday, there was another shooting at Matilda's Mini Mart that caused the death of the owner of the shop, Leslie Naaman Gillett, 37, a resident of the Fresh Pond Community. After receiving reports of a shooting incident at the store, police went to the scene, where they found Gillett in a motionless state. Reports have revealed that at around 5:25 p.m., five male persons arrived at the establishment to purchase some items, and when Gillett turned his back to them to make his way to the counter, one of the men pulled out a



Leslie Gillett, deceased

firearm, and fired several shots at Gillett, which caused fatal injuries.

"We have several persons being questioned in connection with this, and hopefully the information that the investigators have gathered so far will become useful that can lead to some kind of detention and hopefully an arrest," said Communications Director for the Belize Police Department, ASP Fitzroy Yearwood.

When asked whether in fact Gillett had been the intended target of the gunman who killed his two employees in November, Yearwood stated, "We have interviewed some persons that believe so, but we can't just believe. We at the Police Department have to try to stick to the facts and rely on that to try to bring some kind of clarity. People in the village are rumoring that; I will not deny that, but we here cannot go on rumors unless proven otherwise, and we will try to piece it together."

Police are still investigating the murders of both Brown and Miguel, as the case remains unsolved.

# Man gunned down in Belama Phase 1

by Charles Gladden

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

On Friday night, at around 9:20 p.m., police responded to a report of a shooting on Beltex Crescent in the Belama Phase 1 area. When they went to the scene, they found Virgil Everett Coburn, better known as "Pocket", a 33-year-old Belizean enforcement officer who lived in Belama Phase 2, suffering from gunshot wounds to his body.

According to police, around 9:15 p.m., Coburn was on Beltex Crescent in front of a residence, waiting for food he had ordered from a snack shop to be delivered,

when a vehicle approached and stopped in front of the yard, and someone inside the vehicle fired a barrage of shots.

Police later recovered several expended shells from the scene.

"We must say that our investigators have gathered useful information that they believe [that] will lead to the



Virgil Everett Coburn, deceased

identity of these assailants." stated the Police Department's Communications Director, ASP Fitzroy Yearwood, in reference to the shooting.

Coburn was transported to the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, where he was pronounced dead. Police are investigating.

# About 300 police officers out with COVID-19

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

Today, the Commissioner of Police informed the public that about 300 police officers are currently not reporting for duty after testing positive for COVID-19. He said that the department is currently spreading officers across the country to ensure that they continue to provide an adequate level of security for the citizenry, but the reduction of manpower is affecting the department. Williams also stated that currently Placencia is the area most affected,

with almost 50% of the formation in that tourism hub out sick.

He said that the department should never reach the point where they have to close down a station, since they send officers from other formations to fill the necessary gaps.

At this time, following a directive from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, public servants are mandated to quarantine for only 7 days before they can be cleared by a medical professional to re-enter the workforce.





# Infographic: Endemic vs pandemic diseases

Continued from Page 10

cold to more severe diseases including HIV, malaria and tuberculosis.

Epidemiologists, scientists who study the spread of diseases, consider a disease endemic when its levels are consistent and predictable. Endemic diseases are constantly present in a population within a particular region.

Below we compare the number of

cases and deaths per year from endemic diseases.

For COVID-19 to become endemic, several factors would need to be considered, including how the disease continues to evolve as well as the type of immunity people acquire through infection and vaccines.

### The dominant Omicron variant

Like all viruses, the SARS-COV-2 coronavirus has been mutating since it emerged in late 2019.

Mutations – changes in genetic code – in a virus’s spike protein can affect its ability to infect cells.

Omicron, a more transmissible variant first detected in November 2021, has now been detected in at least 165 countries and territories worldwide.

It has pushed COVID-19 cases to record highs around the world with at least 100 countries recording their all-time highest daily confirmed cases since the start of 2022.

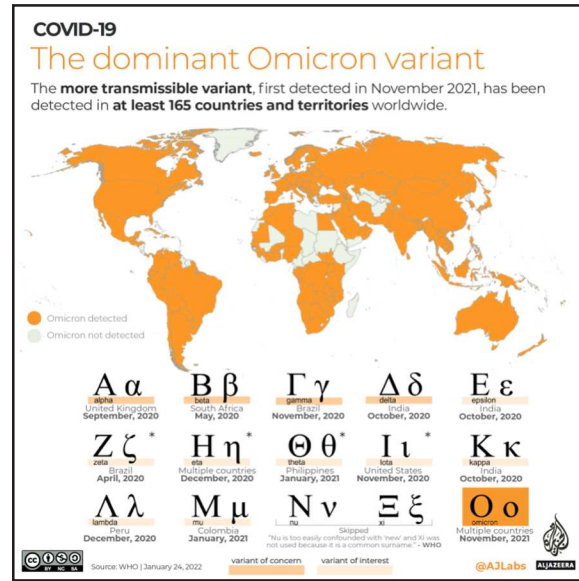
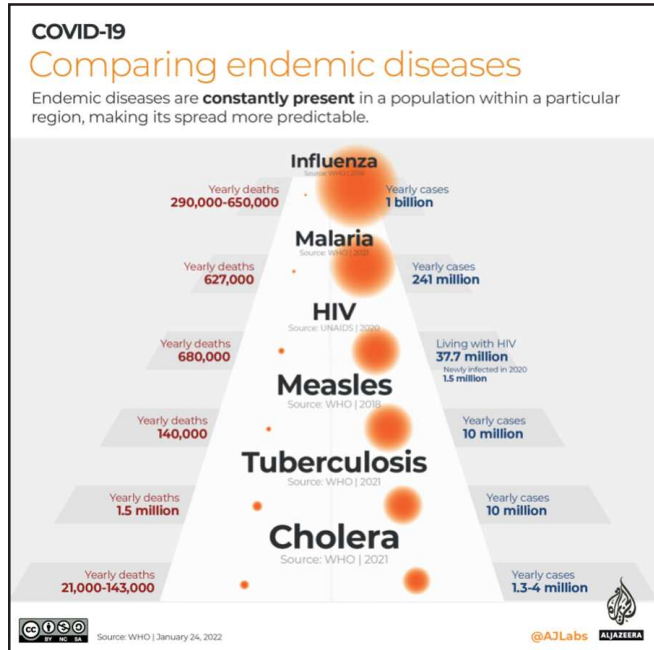
There are also an unknown number of people who may have been infected with Omicron but were not tested.

As variants become more infectious, the herd immunity threshold increases. This is why the threshold percentage has gradually been increasing from about 60-70 percent during the original strain to 85 percent with Delta and upwards of 90 percent with Omicron.

Meanwhile, many poorer countries that are still waiting for vaccines may be a long way from seeing the end of the pandemic.

Only 5 percent of people in low-income countries are fully vaccinated according to the latest figures by Our World In Data.

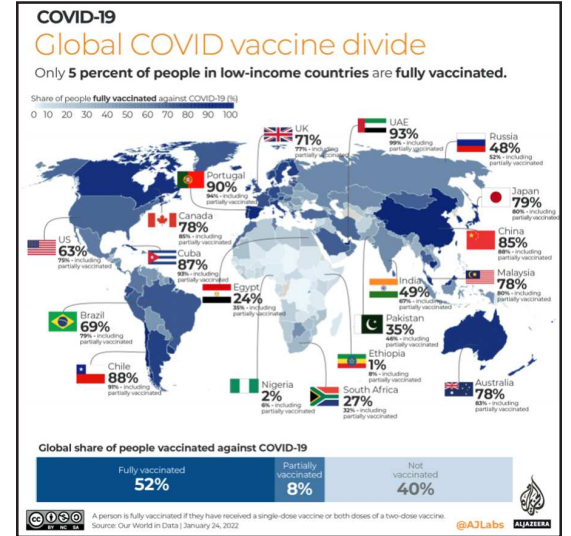
First published by Al Jazeera



### Varying worldwide immunity levels

The WHO predicts more than half of the people in Europe could catch Omicron by March which, coupled with high vaccine rates, should lead to higher levels of immunity.

Herd immunity occurs when a large proportion of a community becomes immune to a disease through infection or vaccines, halting the disease from spreading.





# Calls for the LOO's resignation are mounting

*The NTUCB, the PUP, and many others have issued statements condemning domestic violence and demanding that Hon. Patrick Faber resign*

by **Khaila Gentle**

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

In the face of the recent allegations made against Leader of the Opposition, Hon. Patrick Faber, The People's United Party, the National Trade Union Congress of Belize, The Office of the Special Envoy, and UDP Deputy Leader Hon. Hugo Patt have all issued statements condemning domestic violence. The PUP, the Office of the Special Envoy, and UDP Chairman Michael Peyrefitte, however, have taken things a step further, demanding that Faber resign.

On Friday, the National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) issued a press release condemning all acts of violence against women and stating that it has zero tolerance for

the men who perpetrate such acts. The NTUCB's release went on to call for provisions to be made in the Belize Constitution and in the Standing Orders of the House of Representatives and Senate that would make domestic violence a criterion for disqualification of members of parliament.

Faber has faced multiple allegations of domestic abuse, and in response, the People's United Party stated on Monday that "enough is enough."

In addition to voicing its support for the NTUCB's call for constitutional reform, the PUP said the following in a press release:

"The People's United Party joins the call for the immediate resignation of Patrick Faber and further, calls that

he resigns as a Member of Parliament. With the alarming rate of deaths and violence against our women due to domestic abuse, the PUP further calls on the United Democratic Party (UDP) to uphold its own call of not condoning gender-based violence and demand that they too call for the resignation of Patrick Faber."

The Office of the Special Envoy has also called for Faber's resignation, stating that this most recent incident not only resulted in a warrant for Faber's arrest but also ended with the complainant withdrawing all charges—a common occurrence in the cycle of domestic abuse. Additionally, the Office of the Special Envoy has spoken out against the slew of criticism that the complainant, Dr. Shanikka Arnold, has received for withdrawing the charges.

"Our women need our support, not criticism, as they navigate the terrible scourge of abuse and violence. It is important that victims know they are not alone. It is critically important we work harder to empower our women and provide the support and safety mechanisms they need to break the

cycle of domestic abuse," said the release.

Even Faber's fellow party member and Chairman of the United Democratic Party, Michael Peyrefitte has called for Faber's immediate resignation, stating that the people of Belize will neither tolerate nor believe in a party whose leader is constantly involved in domestic violence incidents. Peyrefitte is joined by The United Democratic Party National Organization for Women (UDP NOW), which, in a recent press release, has called upon the party's Executive Committee to begin the process of selecting a new leader. The organization also expressed its "unwavering support for the Hon. Tracy Panton as the next Leader of the United Democratic Party and Leader of the Opposition."



**Hon. Tracy Panton**

## No more AstraZeneca vaccines after January 31

*Starting February, the Ministry of Health will no longer be administering AstraZeneca vaccines at its sites. Currently, there are 59,000 doses in stock.*

by **Khaila Gentle**

BELIZE CITY, Mon. Jan. 24, 2022

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has advised the public that, come February 1, 2022, AstraZeneca vaccines will no longer be administered at vaccination sites. And according to the Technical Advisor in the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Dr. Natalia Beer, this is because the expiration date for the last batch of AstraZeneca vaccines currently being used by the ministry is set for January 31. As a result, the ministry is inviting persons needing a first dose, persons who received their first dose of AstraZeneca eight weeks or more ago, and persons requiring a booster (three months after their second dose) to get vaccinated before the end of the month.

Once the vaccines expire, they will most likely be thrown away. And while many may think it a waste, considering the fact that so many other countries are in need of vaccines, Dr. Beer noted that in the world of immunization, there is a wastage factor for all vaccines. She pointed out, however, that healthcare workers have ensured throughout the pandemic that the wasting of vaccines is avoided as much as possible.

"When it comes to the COVID-19 vaccine—and I must applaud the healthcare workers that are a part of the team at the vaccination sites—they go the extra mile ensuring that we use the last doses available in a



**Dr. Natalia Beer, Ministry of Health and Wellness Technical Advisor**

vial of a COVID-19 vaccine," she stated.

Having to throw away vaccines upon expiration, especially while recognizing the value of COVID-19 vaccines in preventing severe illness, is a painful situation, said Dr. Beer. But while the ministry has tried to re-donate the vaccines, they have not received any positive responses.

"Yes, it is a pity that we may not be able to utilize these vaccines, but it all depends on persons that are pending to be vaccinated and if they would uptake the AstraZeneca vaccine," she said.

According to Dr. Beer, the Government of Belize has, to date, procured over 638,000 vaccines and has utilized 65% (or 327,000) of those jabs. Of the vaccines procured, 368,800 doses were AstraZeneca.

At present, 99,000 persons have yet to receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Dr. Beer says she continues to hope that those persons will show up for vaccination.

## Man, 26, shot to death while socializing near home



**Michael Lambey, deceased**

by **Charles Gladden**

BELIZE CITY, Sun. Jan. 23, 2022

On Thursday night, at around 6:15, Michael Lambey, 26, was socializing with friends of his behind a vehicle only a stone's throw from his house on Curl Thompson Street in the Jane

Usher area when two gunmen approached them from the direction of Mud Street and fired a number of shots.

Lambey, who was wounded when the shots were fired, tried to run, but collapsed, and one of the gunmen then stood beside him and shot him at close range—killing him instantly. Both shooters then ran back toward Mud Street, entered a vehicle, and escaped.

According to relatives of Lambey, he regularly spent time socializing with his friends at the location on the street where he was shot. His sister told local reporters that she saw a black car pass shortly before the shooting,

and when she and other members of the family ran outside, they saw blood on the ground.

She believes Lambey was shot because he associated with persons who were targets of the gunmen. She said he may have been at the wrong place, at the wrong time.



## BDF soldiers sent to PBL

Continued from Page 1

moves by PBL that have been viewed as provocative and insulting by the stevedores. According to one stevedore, the current CEO at the port, Andy Lane (the manager of a private company reportedly owned by Lord Michael Ashcroft, who is the reported business associate of Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño's family) took the members of the country's military—officers trained to use arms to kill in international confrontations that threaten the country—to the pier head himself, and shortly after, they saw trucks heading in that direction which gave an indication that the security forces would be used to offload the ships. This led the stevedores who were onsite, to enter the port, despite being subject to what Neal described as manhandling, and a scuffle ensued.

Neal told local reporters that they decided to go back outside the PBL compound and stand watch, to wait and see if the BDF soldiers would be used to do their work, since they had received information from the Christian Workers Union's president, Evan "Mose" Hyde, that PBL had informed him that those soldiers were at the pier head for security purposes. It was not specified what exactly was being secured by the soldiers, who were not present a month ago when a similarly intense standoff between locals and a multinational entity resulted in a blockade outside the ASR/BSI compound in Orange Walk that brought a key national industry to a halt—an intense period, during which a group of about 40 cañeros were seen on video footage attacking the chairman of a sugarcane farmers association and machetes were brandished on camera. (Notably, the Prime Minister and several ministers were involved in brokering a truce to address that standoff in the industry—something they have seemingly refused to do for the stevedores.) The CWU believes that the Government of Belize, in approving the use of our security forces, has not only sided with the private Ashcroft-owned entity in charge of the receivership, PBL, but has also "broken the back" of a legitimate industrial action. In addition, the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) between the stevedores and PBL mandates that no one should be allowed to do the stevedores' work, according to Neal.

CWU president Hyde said that rumors had emerged that non-stevedore labor would be used to offload the ships, and some stevedores had stayed outside the port all night. All parties, including CEO Lane, confirmed that the BDF were at the pier head, and Lane confirmed what Hyde said he had been told: that the soldiers were there for security purposes.

On the previous day, the stevedores had staged a protest

following PBL's rejection of their request that two skilled workers who had resigned the previous year be rehired to serve as crane supervisors in order to ensure safety during unloading operations. Their request that two persons be added to the list of substitutes was also rejected by the PBL human resources personnel, who had reportedly taken the stance that no hiring would take place until an agreement on Secondary Substitutes is signed.

This enraged the stevedores of the CWU, who had already been disheartened by both PBL's and the Prime Minister's apparent disregard of the economic blow they suffered after GOB's decision, with PBL's acquiescence, to allow the transfer of sugar-loading operations to Big Creek. The stevedores, who had issued a notice for industrial action about 8 months ago, are still at odds with PBL due to an apparent unwillingness of the port's management to grant them a sugar redundancy package to compensate them for their losses. The workers are reportedly requesting 5 million dollars to offset the earnings they have lost and will continue to lose for the rest of their career as a result of the transfer of the sugar ships to the Big Creek Port. Guy Neal, who has been a stevedore for 40 years, said that the sugar separation package agreement is the crux of the matter.

"The whole bottom[line] is that they need to talk to us about the separation package for the sugar. This strike that we pull off yesterday, this we give that notice about 7 to 8 months ago. We decide that we won't [cause] any issue to the public around Christmas time, we will make everything flow, everybody get their Christmas situation together, we get our bonus, get your ham, get your turkey. But now we have to make a stand." Neal said.

CEO Lane told local media that the situation is very unfortunate and regrettable due to the impact it is having on ships with import containers that are destined for Belize. He said that those cargo containers will go back to where they came from, or they might wait, but that the decision will be made by the ship operator. More ships were also lined up for unloading this weekend.



Evan "Mose" Hyde –  
President, CWU

## Faber steps down

Continued from Page 1

signal my departure as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives and leader of our great United Democratic Party. Both resignations I wish to become effective within a few days on January 31, 2022. While I maintain that the information circulating about the matter with Dr. Shanikka Arnold are not the facts, the ills that come with these allegations are simply too much of a burden for me to place on the shoulder of our beloved party and its faithful membership," Faber said during his message.

The leaked police statement, which has since been recanted by the complainant, suggests that Faber had attempted to end the relationship, and that the locks at the Lords Bank home shared by the couple had been changed, but the alleged altercation in question ensued following Dr. Arnold's refusal to return the keys to

the home and leave the location. The police report paints a picture of a very angry and even violent Patrick Faber, but also appears to indicate that Dr. Arnold was unwilling to leave the location upon the initial sign of violence.

Despite what was recorded in the now recanted report, Faber in his video message today remarked, "I have made a decision to focus my attention on giving my fiancée in this, her time of need, my full attention and support."

And while his resignation may indicate an end to his political leadership at this time, Faber asks the public not to fully write him off. "I will also work on me to ensure that in the future times I can come to be as best as I can the advocate for Belize's development that you've all known me to be in the past. Rest assured that my efforts remain committed for the people of Collet whom I will continue to represent," he vowed.

## COMPOL speaks on recent murder spike

Continued from Page 1

hearing; later on that same day, Leslie Gillett was killed in a shooting at Matilda's Mini Mart in Burrell Boom (eerily, a double murder claimed the lives of two workers at that store late last year), and on Friday night, around 9:30, Virgil Coburn was killed in Belama Phase 1. At this time, according to Commissioner of Police Williams, police have been actively working to bring the bloodbath under control and have so far been successful, with no new murder being recorded since Friday night.

He said that these recent spikes in crime across the country show that our people are becoming more violent and an interagency approach is needed to address the situation. Williams said that the Police Department can do its part, but without the help of the public, the crime and violence plaguing the country will not be holistically addressed.

"I don't think anyone can say that there is nothing being done by the police, and even perhaps the government, in trying to address the issue of our youths on the streets, particularly in Belize City. Yes, from time to time we are going to have these flare-ups, and we always try our best to see what we can do to bring it under control, and I think that

you guys can see for yourself that yes, we have been able to bring the situation under control." Williams remarked.

He added, "When we look at the whole issue of these murders, I think we need to look beyond the police, because it is not that the police will know that a person is going to do a murder and just sit on our laurels and do nothing, but rather it goes to show that the nature of our society is changing. Our people is becoming more and more violent."

This weekend there was an intervention coordination by the Leadership Intervention Unit. The COMPOL said that he was invited, but declined to sit and speak with the known gang leaders. He told local reporters, "All again, with an attempt to stop the bleeding, that we are seeing on the street of Belize City, the LIU brought together the different gang leaders and had a meeting with them. I was invited to that meeting and I told them that I was not going to attend that meeting, because I had no intention to meet with them. I simply told LIU to inform the gang leaders that if it is they continue with their problems, I will know what to do to address their issues."

He said that the gang members had indicated a commitment to ensuring that "certain things would occur," so they are waiting to see how things pan out.

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# 8 COPA passengers flee country after seeking asylum

Continued from Page 1

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Immigration has released an update on the situation of those 37 passengers.

“In accordance with its legal obligations, the Government of Belize allowed the representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Belize to have direct access to the Venezuelan nationals who had arrived in Belize on the 18th January 2022 and who were refused leave to land,” stated the release.

The representatives were allowed to interview the passengers. As a result, eight of them were handed over to Help for Progress and were to have sought refugee status in Belize.

Later in the evening, however, the Foreign Affairs Ministry issued a second update, stating that the so-called asylum seekers had escaped from the UNHCR and fled to Mexico.

“This afternoon UNHCR National Office - Belize informed that the eight (8) Venezuelan nationals that were taken by UNHCR National Office - Belize to the Help for Progress shelter in Belmopan on Saturday 22nd January 2022 have left the shelter and apparently made their way to Mexico. Consequently, they never visited the Refugees Department to apply for asylum,” stated the ministry’s press release.

Before the escape, the Government of Belize had indicated to the UNHCR National Office - Belize that



The 37 passengers onboard the COPA flight

it was to ensure that the eight persons did not disappear while their refugee applications were being processed. The ministry has referred to the refugees’ escape as an “unacceptable turn of events” and Minister Eamon Courtenay has spoken with Mr. Roland-Francois Weil, UNHCR Head of Office, informing him of the need for strong protocols to prevent future incidents like this one.

In regards to the other passengers, on Friday, the sole Dominican national who was aboard the flight—and who, it is being alleged, initially

incited unrest among the passengers at the PGIA that led to their detention—was escorted back to Panama on a TAG Airlines flight. And on Saturday, 19 Venezuelans and 1 Moroccan national returned to Panama on a COPA flight.

The press release also noted that several of the other remaining passengers, including some children, tested positive for COVID-19 and will remain at the Best Western Belize Biltmore Plaza Hotel at the expense of COPA Airlines until it is safe for them to return to Panama.

## Is COVID-19 becoming endemic? Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa explains.

Continued from Page 1

country’s Epidemiology Unit have confirmed that Belize is currently in the midst of the fourth wave of COVID-19, and in an effort to answer pressing questions regarding the spread of the much milder but much more transmissible Omicron variant, Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa, who served as the Acting Director of Health Services and is Deputy Manager of the Central Health Region, spent some time speaking with the media today. According to Musa, Belize is currently approaching the peak of its fourth wave. It is predicted that the peak will reach a plateau within the next few days and that a rapid decrease in cases should follow. Data from the Epidemiology Unit is also indicating that the country will likely see a pre-Omicron number of cases by early to mid-February. These predictions, says Dr. Diaz-Musa, are encouraging, but they are also based on the current health measures that are in place across the country.

“We’ve got to keep in mind that these predictions are based on the measures that are in place right now. So, if everything remains the same—our public health measures remain the same, our work measures remain the same—we should see a peak very soon,” she stated.

And while the country has been seeing record-breaking numbers of COVID-19 cases over the past few days, most infected persons have reportedly been experiencing mild symptoms. Hospitalizations and ICU admissions have decreased as well. Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa also pointed out that the country’s overall case fatality rate has decreased from 3 to 1.5 this year. Many persons believe that these are indications that COVID-19 is on its way to becoming endemic—meaning, it will always be present in the world’s population but its impact will be much less severe and less disruptive.

Dr. Musa agreed that COVID-19 is

likely on the way to becoming endemic, but when asked what this means for the future, and whether Belize will follow in the footsteps of the UK, which recently announced its decision to abolish mask mandates, she stated that it is far too early to decide.

What health officials do know, is that the Omicron variant has finally been officially identified in Belize. Forty-two samples were recently sent out for genomic sequencing, and 83% of them were identified as Omicron, while the rest were identified as the Delta variant. But despite the majority of current cases appearing to be a result of the much milder variant, Musa says we shouldn’t get too relaxed too soon.

“It’s very important for us to stress, from the Ministry of Health & Wellness as well, that when you get infected, you don’t know what variant you’re going to get infected with,” she stated.

She stressed that while one person might experience mild COVID-19 symptoms, they could still easily pass the virus on to someone with a higher chance of having a severe reaction. She also warned that while Omicron is milder, not taking precautions could still end up putting a strain on the healthcare system.

Dr. Melissa Diaz-Musa also commented that data continues to show that vaccines reduce the severity of infection and the chances of hospitalization or death.

Where vaccination numbers are concerned, recent reports show that as of the 17<sup>th</sup> of January, 212,080 persons (or 49.3% of the population) have received at least one dose of a vaccine while 201,930 persons (46.9%) have been fully vaccinated. In the case of Belizeans ages twelve to seventeen, 24,683 have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Over 24,905 booster shots have been administered to date.

Currently, there are over 338,000 vaccines available in the country.

## Mia Mottley & the BLP sweep Barbados elections

Continued from Page 1

the 20th of January confident that the people of this nation have spoken with one voice - decisively, unanimously, and clearly,” said Mottley.

Back in December, she called for snap elections, stating that it would help to promote unity in the country in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a move criticized by opposition leaders who felt it unfair to hold elections at a time when many Barbadians are infected with COVID-19 and unable to leave their homes. Some attempted to stop the vote with a court injunction but were ultimately unsuccessful.

“When I spoke to you back on the 27th of December, I asked us to recognize that there are times in the life of a nation when we need to go back to the people. And when we need to be able to allow the people in whom power resides to make decisions about its future. It became clear to us that the ability to prepare this nation for the serious challenges that we will face in the next ten to fifteen years required that we give the people of this nation the option of choosing who it wanted to lead it into that process,” stated the Barbadian Prime Minister.

After the election, the leader of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP), Verla De Peiza, conceded defeat. And on Friday, January 21, De Peiza resigned from the position of party leader. According to political scientists, however, finding a new leader is going to be the least of the opposing party’s concerns.

“I don’t think the problem of the DLP is a question of who the leader is or, in this particular context, the problem is not solved by a particular leader. There is a much deeper philosophical and capital and internal rethinking and rebranding and so forth that needs to be done that goes beyond just a leader,” said Dr. Tennyson Joseph in an article by *Barbados Today*. Joseph, along with Dr. Kristina Hinds, believes that the DLP is going to need complete revamping.

On November 1, 2021, Barbados made its mark at the COP26 conference when Prime Minister Mottley admonished global leaders for not trying hard enough in the fight against climate change. The country then gained further international attention on November 30, 2021, when it became the world’s youngest republic after renouncing the British Queen as its head of state.

“We are conscious as a political institution that there is still much to be done and that there is a road still to be traveled. And that there are things that you as Barbadians are legitimately expecting of us,” said Mottley in her victory address.

“But we are equally conscious that it comes very rarely to a generation to change the pattern of history and to transform a nation. In a very real sense, we felt—as we told you in 2018—that we had been existing on the fumes of the independence generation rather than seeking to carry this nation forward and to release the opportunities that are so obviously available, particularly to Barbadians and young Barbadians,” she added.





# 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
- \* 1<sup>st</sup> 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 4<sup>th</sup> 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

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