

Reporter

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Kareem Martinez sentenced to 18 years in prison



Former Corporal Kareem Martinez



Laddie Gillett

By Javan Flowers

Former Corporal of Police Kareem Martinez was sentenced to 18 years in prison after being found guilty, by Justice Antoinette Moore, of the manslaughter of 14-year-old Laddie Gillett.

In her April judgment, Justice Moore found that neither Martinez nor any of the officers present that night had any legal ground to suspect Gillett of committing or being about to commit a crime, or otherwise being a public nuisance, and, therefore, of no

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\$90M loan for new hospital; LOO says GOB should improve current facilities first



Prime Minister Hon. John Briteeno (top) and Hon. Moses Barrow

By Javan Flowers

The Government of Belize is preparing to construct a \$90 million tertiary-

level hospital in Belmopan, but the Leader of the Opposition says current public-health facilities should have

received those funds.

The funds for the construction of the state-of-the-art facility are being provided

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CWU: PBL remains unwilling to honor Tribunal's decision



CWU Special Advisor Mose Hyde

By Javan Flowers

The Christian Workers Union (CWU), in their latest press conference held this week, is still at odds with the Port of Belize Ltd (PBL), as PBL remains unwilling to honor the ruling of the Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal.

The CWU, PBL, and the Ministry

of Labor convened on May 11th, 2023, to commence negotiations for a sugar redundancy package for stevedores. The conclusion of said meeting saw CWU representatives, while mute on details, emerge optimistic that the meeting's discourse saw a step in the direction of resolving

the loggerhead that waterfront workers are facing with their employer.

It has since been two weeks since that convening, and the CWU's optimism has turned into utter pessimism due to the realization that the discussions held between the CWU and PBL were pointless.

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Belize with her low coastline, in many places only an inch or so above sea-level, and her 450 islands big and small islands, have become a target of climate change. Warmer temperatures, stronger storms and melting glaciers will cause problems of erosion and immersion not seen before.

Belize has two high-profile environmental problems: the shrinking perimeter of Goff's Caye nine miles offshore, and the disappearing coastline of Monkey River village in Toledo.

In Monkey River the beach erosion has been severe, resulting in the loss of several feet of coastline, and Goff's Caye has shrunk to about half of its original size.

But due to the remarkable work of Mr. Ewarth Garbutt, the encroachments by the sea have been halted in Monkey River, and what remains of the coastline has been saved, thanks to a rescue plan which involved the placement of a rock embankment to stabilize the shifting sand.

This involved bringing in rocks by sea, hand-placing them in water that was knee-deep and encasing the rock rampart with wire mesh. The people of Monkey River have lost their beautiful beach, but they now know that their homes are high and dry.

At Goff's Caye a new approach was introduced by the planting of mangrove propagules or seedlings in the shallow water. If the mangroves survive the sea surges, they will stabilize the shifting sand and the beach will regenerate itself with time.

These are measures to prevent erosion, but they are not measures that can counteract against rising sea levels. That is a problem which requires a global approach.

Still, we are grateful to Mr. Garbutt and the people who work with him, and to the volunteers who go out to plant mangrove seedlings at Goff's Caye, sadly aware that her sister caye, the deceased Sargeant's Caye, is no more. These efforts inspire us and remind us that men and women are still to some extent, the masters of their fate and the captains of their souls.

Bravo Mr. Gillett, for his reconstructive work in preserving Monkey River Village. We believe that Monkey River has a story to tell - a story of the endurance of the human spirit.

Kareem Martinez sentenced to 18 years in prison

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lawful authority to use justifiable and deadly force against him. She also faulted their handling of Gillett's friend Thomas Palacio, the key witness in the case.

As has been reported, Laddie Gillett and a friend were running home to beat curfew. Along the route, they encountered two persons dressed in

dark attire. One of the two persons is alleged to be then-police officer Kareem Martinez, who, at the time of the incident, along with his fellow officer, were reportedly responding to a complaint by a resort on the peninsula that the establishment had been burglarized.

During the encounter, Gillett and his friend, fearing the men had ill intent, took off. This apparently resulted in one of the

men, suspected to be Kareem Martinez, reacting by firing a single shot, ending Laddie's life. Laddie was rushed to the Placencia Polyclinic but was already dead when he arrived there.

Martinez was then arraigned in the Belmopan Magistrate's Court, where he was charged with one count of manslaughter for Gillett's death and released on bail of \$8,000.

This incident spurred outcry against the police department and the continued instance of officers using excessive force. This created the "Justice for Laddie" movement, which continues to receive much support from Belizeans nationwide.

Martinez and attorney Oscar Selgado plan an appeal, while Gillett's family continues to press for police and legal reform.

\$90M loan for new hospital; LOO says GOB should improve current facilities

Cont'd from pg. 1

by the Saudi Fund for Development, through a loan at a two percent concessionary rate. Prime Minister John Briceño explained the need for the construction of the hospital during the latest sitting of the House of Representatives.

"Belize's national referral hospital, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital (KMH),

was built over 30 years ago. [Thus] I don't think anyone needs to be convinced that the KMH no longer at its best to meet increasing demands at both national and regional level."

In his rebuttal in Parliament, Hon. Moses "Shyne" Barrow lambasted the motion, stressing that the public health sector is in desperate need of investments towards equipment that will

improve services across the country.

"We live in a country where our public health facility, KMH, Southern Regional, Western Region, Northern Region, [lacks] the minimum essential equipment items needed to treat patients and we, as a government, [will] borrow ninety million dollars to build a hundred and fifty-bed facility, to do what?" challenged Barrow. "We need to invest in public health care facilities that we currently have."

He continued by asserting that medical practitioners that he consulted are clamoring for the upgrade of their health facilities and

not a new building in Belmopan. "That is what the people of Belize and the medical practitioners are crying for... Fix the problem we have at KMH; fix the problem that we have at the other public health facilities. We have a public health facility right here in Belmopan. So why not get the money and invest in what we have."

Last year, healthcare workers protested in an effort to vent their concerns regarding the realities medical practitioners faced daily. News consumers would recall the complaints ranging from shortages of equipment, medications, and more.

PBL remains unwilling to honor Tribunal's decision

Cont'd from pg. 1

At the press conference held, Mose Hyde, CWUs Special Advisor, asserted that PBL refuses to honor the decision of the Essential Services Arbitration Tribunal.

"What I want to do is just to kind of go back to that moment to say that [the] meeting came out of a letter written to us from PBL in which they indicated that they were willing to get around the table to comply with the ESAT ruling. And so, as you can expect, we were very encouraged by that and had a certain level of expectations that we would start to have a meaningful dialogue," Hyde said. He then proceeded

to explain that the outcome of the meeting saw the Ministry of Labor telling PBL that they had a fixed date to negotiate and then present a counterproposal to the CWU. However, after the deadline expired, Hyde noted that PBL simply sent a copy of their original position without complying with the directive they were given.

In response, the Ministry of Labor responded to PBL's position and ordered that they comply with the letter. This then prompted PBL, in a more "aggressive manner," to flat-out refuse the request while maintaining their hardline position.

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Phones: 501- 227-2503 / 227-1767

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

e-mail: reporternewspaper@gmail.com

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

Publisher Harry Lawrence

Editor Dyon A. Elliott

Financial Controller Rosa Maria Lawrence

General Manager Lisbeth Ayuso

Lithographer Rodolfo Castro

Journalists Michelle Sutherland

Javan Flowers

Desktop Publisher/

Graphic Designer Jackie Fuller

Accounts/ Advertising Rodolfo Castro

Chief Printer Earl Young Jr.

Office Assistant Misael Muñoz

BGGL proceeds to bolster NHI, sports, and education

By Javan Flowers

The Government of Belize has announced that Belize Government Lotteries Ltd (BGGL), a government-owned company, will manage the nightly Boledo draw and the weekly Sunday lottery.

In the latest House meeting, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño detailed that BGGL will be required to promote,

conduct, and manage lottery schemes and distribute earnings from the lotteries.

The profit generated from the lotteries will then be administered to the National Health Insurance (NHI) and to the official Charities Fund, which could then direct money to programs under the Ministries of Youth-Sports and Education.

Above all else, Briceño stressed that

BGGL is to ensure that the service provided is "of international industry standards and in compliance with the lotteries license conditions and respective laws."

According to the government, it was the violation of these "conditions and respective laws" that led the Licensing Committee, in citing material and substantial breaches



Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño



The Belize Council of Churches "The Church in Belize on the Move"



On Saturday, May 20, 2023, The Belize Council of Churches met for six hours in the conference room at the Catholic Diocese to explore options and agree on a way forward that would enable it to be more effective in contributing to the betterment of Belize. The Council is presently comprised of church leaders as well as some members of the laity from the Anglican Church, the Methodist Church, the Catholic Church, The Salvation Army, the Chinese Christian Community, the Presbyterian Church, the Black Cross Nurses Association and the YWCA.

In his opening remarks, the President of the Council, Rt. Rev. Bishop Philip Wright, emphasized the need for attendees to fully grasp and understand the Council's identity, purpose and mission as it moves forward in its quest to support and safeguard the interests of the Belizean people. He noted that the nature of the group's engagement with the Belizean community must be multi-faceted. Not only should it make constructive contributions to the national deliberations on Constitutional reform and other legislative proposals in these critical and challenging times, but it must also stand united in reaching out to meet the spiritual and social needs of the Belizean community, since this is central to its Christian mandate and witness in living out the gospel. By its nature, the Council is uniquely placed and called to be such a light in Belize. The day's activities closed with prayer and a general sense of optimism that the Council was now "on the move".



"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. Ez 33:7

of the conditions of the exclusive license, to effectively terminate the exclusive contract granted to Brads Gaming Group Ltd (BGGL).

In protest of the termination, BGGL released a statement noting, "Not once has any Government complained about the revenue stream received, which was over \$4,000,000 per year plus profit-sharing."

The statement further highlighted BGGL's compliance in its annual audits which in turn are handed over to GOB, thus leaving any suggestion of the company not being transparent with its finances as "inaccurate."

However, while BGGL maintains that position, Briceño asserted that there was minimal oversight and reporting on exact earnings being recorded by BGGL. "In 2021 when we wrote the first letter, [in August], the Lotteries Commission wrote the first letter asking for information. All of sudden, sales [went] from \$18.7 million to \$43.8 million. Because of what has happened, they realized that if they don't keep up to what is being asked of them, they could eventually lose the contract."

Briceño then revealed that over the two years that his

administration has been in power, BGGL reported \$125.6 million in sales, a sharp contrast to the 128.6 million dollars reported over ten years under the then Barrow Administration.

Interestingly, last year BGGL brought forth a lawsuit against GOB for trying to "tax the company out of business" with its implementation of Statutory Instrument (SI) 51 of 2022 aimed to plaster a 12.5% lottery tax on boledo, lottery, and jackpot.

Since the termination, BGGL has expressed that it will not seek court action to regain its license but rather "pursue other remedies it may be entitled to" which could mean millions of dollars in potential damages being rewarded to BGGL.

The Leader of the Opposition Hon. Moses "Shyne" Barrow also expressed his concern regarding the potential damages that BGGL could receive. "If you have a legally binding agreement, then you expose the Belizean taxpayers to litigation and damages. So, especially when you listen to those numbers, so that means that Brads Boledo will be taking the government to court for \$50 million in annual revenues."

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A Reflection on the People's Constitutional Commission

by Dominic Dybala

Belize is in the midst of a period of potential constitutional reformation or revolution, for good or ill. Having read the Constitution, we wholeheartedly agree that certain changes are warranted. It is full of legal jargon difficult to understand, and should be clarified and simplified. But we must be very careful!

Beware of the false premise that old is bad and new is good. Stability is a virtue in government, equally vital to the wellbeing of a nation as adaptability. It would be irresponsible to encourage the people of Belize to tear down their constitution which satisfied George Price himself and has well-served the country for 40 years, in exchange for a new constitution

which has not yet been articulated or presented for open deliberation.

Let's not take down a fence without knowing why it was first put up. Encouraging young Belizeans to be dissatisfied and frustrated with their constitution is not the way to form patriots.

Mexico has had three official constitutions and more unofficial ones and at least three civil wars to go along with them. In the Revolutionary years 1791-1804, France had no less than six constitutions, and has had five since then. Are these the role models that the PCC and the nation of Belize wish to emulate? Sir Edmund Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France are apropos: "[Y]ou possessed in some parts the

walls and in all the foundations of a noble and venerable castle. You might have repaired those walls; you might have built on those old foundations. ... You had all these advantages in your ancient states, but you chose to act as if you had never been moulded into civil society and had everything to begin anew. You began ill, because you began by despising everything that belonged to you."

The Belize Constitution is a standard to be striven to be met, amended perhaps, but not to be exchanged for a new one. I pray the PCC and all Belizeans who love democracy, God, and their country, consider the following reflections for the good of the nation.

First, the people

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Call for Expression of Interest

PACT is seeking the consultancy services of a qualified firm to carry out an assessment that identifies the functional roles that PACT needs to be executing within its current and future macro-operating environment and relative to the objectives set out in its Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027. The overall objective of the consultancy is to assess the current status of PACT's institutional capacity with a view to develop and designing a functional structure and organogram that aligns with the macro environment in which PACT is now operating, proposed legislative amendments, and the PACT Strategic Plan 2022-2027.

Expressions of Interest (EOI) from interested firms must include a signed cover letter and information regarding the competence and experience of the firm relevant to the assignment. It should also include the names and CVs detailing the relevant experience of the individual experts of the firm. The full Terms of Reference will only be shared with short-listed proponents upon the Request for Proposals.

The Call for EOIs will be made according to PACT's procurement procedures.

Packages should be submitted no later than May 30, 2023, at 5:00pm. Packages should be addressed to:

Mr. Radin Santos
Procurement Officer
Protected Areas Conservation Trust

Re: Expression of interest – Consultancy to Conduct an Institutional Human Resources Assessment for PACT

Soft copies should be sent via email to:

procurementofficer@pactbelize.org and execsecretary@pactbelize.org

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Belizeans at US-Mexico border seeking asylum

By Javan Flowers

A number of Belizeans, amongst thousands of refugees from other countries, are lined up and camped out on the Mexican side of the US border, desperate to seek asylum.

International reports suggest that an inordinate

number of refugees from Central and South America and the Caribbean are camping out on the Mexican side of the border with the US hoping to seek asylum from poverty, persecution, climate change, hunger, and gang warfare.

Though, now that Title 42 has

been lifted, the US government is returning to Title 8, which Homeland Security officials warn could pose more severe consequences for immigrants found to be entering the US illegally.

Title 42 allowed border authorities to swiftly turn away migrants

encountered at the US-Mexico border to prevent the spread of COVID-19, thus, depriving migrants of the chance to claim asylum and dramatically reducing border processing time. However, it also carried almost no legal consequences for migrants crossing, meaning they could try to cross again multiple times if they were pushed back.

Speaking with KRCA, a television station based in California, was a Belizean migrant attempting to seek

asylum. She noted that resources and care thus far have been given out disproportionately, with those in front taking priority over everyone else.

"People at the front have more attention [because] they have kids, and that's good because the kids do need to get food and stuff, but we are also hungry, and they can probably give us a one or two stuff [to eat]. Sometimes they [act as if though] we don't exist at the back, and that's what's hurting us. That is why I came

to the front to see if I can get something to eat."

Notably, families and groups are being organized in single-file lines, and those groups are each appointed a leader in charge of distributing necessities.

International media houses on the ground have reported that shelters and nonprofit organizations on both sides of the border have been attending to persons for weeks as migrants gathered daily between two barriers dividing San Diego and Tijuana.

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Operation Data

Operation: Development of UB's Capital Fund & Property/Asset Management Structure

Consulting Data

Name of Consultancy: Consultancy Services for the Development of UB's Capital Fund & Property/Asset Management Structure

Reference Number: The Board of Trustees of the University of Belize has approved the Development of a UB Capital Fund & Property/Asset Management Structure

The Consulting Services ("the Services") include:

The University of Belize invites eligible consulting firms to express their interest in providing the requested services. Interested consultants shall provide information indicating that they are qualified to provide the services and may partner with other firms in the form of a Joint Venture (JV) or sub-consultants to improve their qualifications. The criteria for shortlist selection are found within the respective Terms of Reference (TOR).

Interested Consulting Firms can obtain the TOR at no cost by requesting them via email at: egbert.iring@ub.edu.bz. Consultants will be selected using the University's Tendering/Procurement Policy criteria.

Interested consultants can obtain more information at the address indicated at the end of this invitation, during regular business hours.

One electronic copy of the Expression(s) of interest together with the information indicated in the TOR must be submitted below. The file(s) containing each submission should include the same address of the applicant and shall be clearly marked "Expression of Interest- Consultancy Services for Contract to develop UB's Capital Fund and Property/Asset Management Structure and shall be submitted at its Belmopan Central Campus no later than 9:00 a.m. local time on June 30, 2023.

The burden of proving receipt of the email will be on the applicant and will not be met solely by a read receipt of sent items reported generated by the applicant's computer. Confirmation of receipt can be requested at the address listed below.

University of Belize
Office of the President
ATT: Office of Institutional Advancement
Mr. Egbert Irving
Director of Institutional Advancement
University of Belize
City of Belmopan
Email: egbert.iring@ub.edu.bz

South Korea asks for Belize's support in its bid to host 2030 World Expo

By Javan Flowers

South Korea's Foreign Minister Park Jin has called for Belize, and other Central and South American countries, to support his country's bid to host the 2030 World Expo.

Late last week, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño led Belize's delegation at the 9th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) held in Antigua, Guatemala, during which he held bilateral meetings with H.E. Dr. Alejandro Giammattei, President of the Republic of Guatemala, as well as with leaders of the delegations of ACS observer nations, to discuss matters of mutual interest. These included the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, and Saudi Arabia.

Notably, within these

meetings, Minister Jin met with 12 top officials from 11 countries, including Belize's PM Briceño, Guatemalan President Giammattei, and Honduras' Vice President Doris Gutierrez.

Jin expressed South Korea's ambition to bid to host the World Expo 2030 and implored that if it were to be held in Busan, South Korea, it would present crucial opportunities to enhance practical cooperation with Central and South American nations on climate change, maritime fields, and other areas.

In addition, he asked for the countries' cooperation on Seoul's efforts to join the U.N. Security Council as a non-permanent member for the 2024-25 term.

The World Expo is an event attended by more than one hundred



Prime Minister John Briceño attended 9th Summit of the Association of Caribbean States.

nations, intended to unify and promote multilateral public diplomacy and foster a greater understanding of global relationships.

South Korea is one of five countries that have submitted a bid to be

the event's host country in 2030. The last event was held in Dubai in

2020, and the other is planned for 2025 in Japan.

Circular Caribbean Cities fight plastics in the Sea

By William Ysaguirre

The cities of Central America and Mexico have begun a drive to eliminate plastic trash in the Caribbean Sea, through an initiative in partnership with the World Wildlife Fund and the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development (CCAD).

The WWF launched its "Caribbean Circular Cities" communication campaign to educate the public to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics, via a virtual press conference on Monday morning, May 15. This year-long campaign will use social media platforms for maximum impact.

The cities of the Central American Integration System (SICA) must organize to develop a joint disposal plan for plastics which



Andreas Lehnhoff, WWF director for Mesoamerica and Guatemala.

have found unlimited use in industry and medicine, recommended Andreas Lehnhoff, WWF director for Mesoamerica and Guatemala. Most of the plastics found in the sea—89 percent—originated from users on land, and of these 60 percent came from the cities, he cited.

The municipal

governments of the region must take responsibility to promote this agenda, he warned, particularly the most dangerous plastics such as those used in cigarette filters, microplastics such as used in cosmetics, and in electronics. He urged the region to develop regulations

Cont'd on pg 7

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Government of Antigua and Barbuda set to remove Monarchy as Head-of-State

By Javan Flowers

Announcing its plans to drop the British Monarchy eight months ago, the Government of Antigua and Barbuda is on the brink of becoming a republic.

According to Loop Caribbean News, following Prime Minister Gaston Browne's return to Antigua and Barbuda after attending the coronation of King Charles III,



PM Gaston Browne - Antigua and Barbuda

his government's position on becoming a republic was communicated via a Cabinet release.

The statement from Cabinet noted that "despite their participation, the Head of Government reiterated his administration's determination to bring about a Republican form of Government, rather than continue as infinitum the constitutional monarchy as now

exists."

The country announced that a referendum will be held sometime in the future, but a date is yet to be confirmed.

Avid news consumers would recall that in a press conference Hon. Moses "Shyne" Barrow noted that the "monarch should go; the discussion is how, and so that has to be done by referendum."

Sharing similar sentiments, in a recent interview with the

United Kingdom's Guardian's Oliver Laughland, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño said it was "quite likely" Belize would be the next member of the Commonwealth realm to become a republic.

If Antigua and Barbuda vote to remove the monarchy as its Head-of-State, that would leave 14 countries, including Belize, as members of the commonwealth realms.

Circular Caribbean Cities fight plastics in the Sea

Cont'd from pg 7

and incentives to encourage the recycling of plastics into new, reusable items.

Over 11 million tonnes of plastic trash enters the world's oceans each year, he lamented, and this plastic residue eventually crumbles into microplastic particles which can find their way into our food. The alarming fact is that we humans now ingest as many as 100,000 microplastic particles per year, that's about 250 grammes per year, or 5 grammes - the

equivalent of a credit card, per week!

Belize as a member of SICA, along with other countries of the wider Caribbean are preparing for the meeting to be held within a fortnight at the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris on May 29 - June 2. The United Nations' Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee will seek to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

The project is also encouraging private sector participation, and Victoria House, Sunbreeze Hotel, and Pelican Beach Hotel are among the many hotels of the Caribbean which have joined the initiative for the tourism industry to find ways to reduce the use of plastics to eliminate plastic trash from the environment, noted Monica Mejia, technical consultant for the Circular Caribbean Project.

The "No More Plastics in Nature" is promoting the 3 R's: "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle." The goal

is to create digital online platforms to help citizens to integrate with the various public and private sectors, civil societies and academia to dispose of solid waste in a sustainable manner, explained WWF-Mesoamerica freshwater official Teresa Calderon.

It begins with by educating and sensitizing the public about their responsibility about the plastics pollution issue. As the public learns to sort out plastics from their trash, there arises a need to strengthen the value

chain to encourage the collection and recycling of plastics. The data collected of the results achieved can also inform decision-making on the way forward.

The alarming 11 million tonnes of plastics entering the world's oceans per year, works out to a dump truck of plastic entering the sea every minute, informed Maria de Rosario Calderon, WWF senior communications officer.

At that rate, it is estimated that by the year 2050, there will be more plastics in the sea than all the

fish! This means that 99 percent of marine birds will have consumed plastics, with catastrophic consequences. The project will offer three webinars for further education.

The time to address the problem is now, as microplastics have been detected in human blood, warned Romy Stanzel, director Circular Caribbean project.



S U D O K U

Medium Puzzle

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

Sudoku rules are extremely easy: Fill all empty squares so that the numbers 1 to 9 appear once in each row, column and 3x3 box. Tip. Use a soft erasable pencil. Start with the easy puzzles, then move on to the harder ones. Make small pencilmarks to show which numbers are allowed in empty squares. This will come handy when analyzing techniques are used. Never guess! Only make moves based on logical deductions. There is only one unique solution for each puzzle.

Answer to Puzzle

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



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Breast cancer screening should start at age 40, expert task force says

Daily cigarette smoking reduces the size of your brain, a new study of more than 28,000 people suggests.

Scientists have previously found that people who smoke tend to have smaller brains compared to non-smokers (opens in new tab), in terms of volume, but it was unclear whether smoking causes the brain to shrink or if people with smaller brains are more likely to start smoking. Now, researchers provide strong evidence that smoking causally shrinks the brain in a new report, which was posted April 28 on the preprint database medRxiv (opens in new tab) and has yet to be peer-reviewed.

“This is a very important study,” Dajiang Liu (opens in new tab), who studies the genetics of smoking risk at the Penn State College of Medicine and was not involved in the female patients should start getting mammograms to screen for breast cancer at age 40 and then get one every other year, a U.S. panel of experts has recommended. Previously, the same panel advised that regular breast cancer screening should begin at age 50.

This new guidance was announced Tuesday (May 9) in a draft recommendation statement issued by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF). The task force receives support from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but it operates independently and is staffed by volunteer experts in primary care and prevention.

In previous guidance, issued in 2016, the task force recommended biennial breast cancer screenings for female patients ages 50 to 74 years old. Starting screening at younger ages, between 40 and 49 years old, was framed as an individual decision.

“New and more inclusive science about breast cancer in people younger than 50 has enabled us to expand our prior recommendation and encourage all women to get screened every other year starting at age 40,” Dr. Carol Mangione, the Task Force’s immediate past chair, said in the draft statement. The updated guidance also reflects improvements in digital mammography and in breast cancer treatment, which together have increased the benefits of getting mammograms earlier in life, Reuters reported.

“This new recommendation will help save lives and prevent more women from dying due to breast cancer,” Mangione said. (In its statement, the task force specified that it’s using the term “women” to refer to cisgender women and other people assigned female at birth.)

If all those eligible got the recommended screening, breast cancer mortality rates in the U.S. could drop by 19%, the USPSTF statement says.

This general guidance applies to women at average risk for breast cancer, the statement says. It does not apply to people at high risk of the disease, such as those with a past history of breast cancer, those who carry certain genetic markers or those with a history of high-dose radiation therapy to their chest at a young age. Those individuals should consult a doctor about when to begin getting mammograms.

In the future, the task force hopes to issue recommendations tailored for specific racial groups, who face different levels of risk of early death from breast cancer, and for people with dense breast tissue, whose cancer may be difficult to detect on mammograms. The task force called



for more research on both of these fronts.

A recent study suggested that Black patients should start undergoing mammograms at age 42, instead of 50, because their risk of breast cancer death in their 40s is higher than that seen in other racial groups.

“Ensuring Black women start screening at age 40 is an important first step, yet it is not enough to improve the health inequities we face related to breast cancer,” Dr. Wanda Nicholson, the task force vice chair, said in the statement. “In our draft recommendation, we underscore the importance of equitable followup after screening and timely and effective treatment of breast cancer and are urgently calling for more research on how to improve the health of Black women.”

The task force is also calling for research on whether and how additional screening — with ultrasound or MRIs, for example — might help patients with dense breasts get diagnosed earlier.

The potential risks of getting mammograms

include false-positive results — meaning a person’s test results suggest they have cancer when they don’t — which can lead to unnecessary biopsies and incorrect diagnoses, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). In addition, because mammograms involve X-ray exposure, each screening exposes patients to a small dose of ionizing radiation.

“We all are exposed to ionizing radiation every day from the natural environment, but additional exposures can lead to an increase in the possibility of developing cancer later in life,” the CDC states. The average dose of radiation used in a typical mammogram with two views of each breast is about 0.4 millisieverts (mSv); for context, U.S. citizens are exposed to about 3.11 mSv of “background radiation” in the environment each year.

“The benefits of breast cancer screening far exceed the radiation risks,” the International Atomic Energy Agency states.

- Live Science



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FUN FACTS!

Giant Water Lily Facts



Water lilies are among the most beautiful and romantic plants, partly thanks to the famed paintings by Claude Monet. But the giant water lilies are especially spectacular with their enormous leaves, sometimes up to 6 feet (2 m) in diameter. Read on to learn more about these amazing plants. The Amazon Water Lily It is hard to understand just how huge the leaves of the Amazon water lily (Victoria amazonica) are without seeing them. Fortunately, they are available for viewing

in botanical gardens around the country. It helps to call to mind someone you know who is 6 feet tall (1.8 m.) since that is the potential diameter of each of the large leaves. The edges of the leaves are turned up, creating a sort of shallow cup. 1 second of 1 minute, 29 seconds Volume 0% 01:26 The leaves "float" on the surface of the water, supported by spongy veins. Their size allows the plant to take in the maximum sunshine possible. The underside of each leaf has spines, thought to be a way of preventing

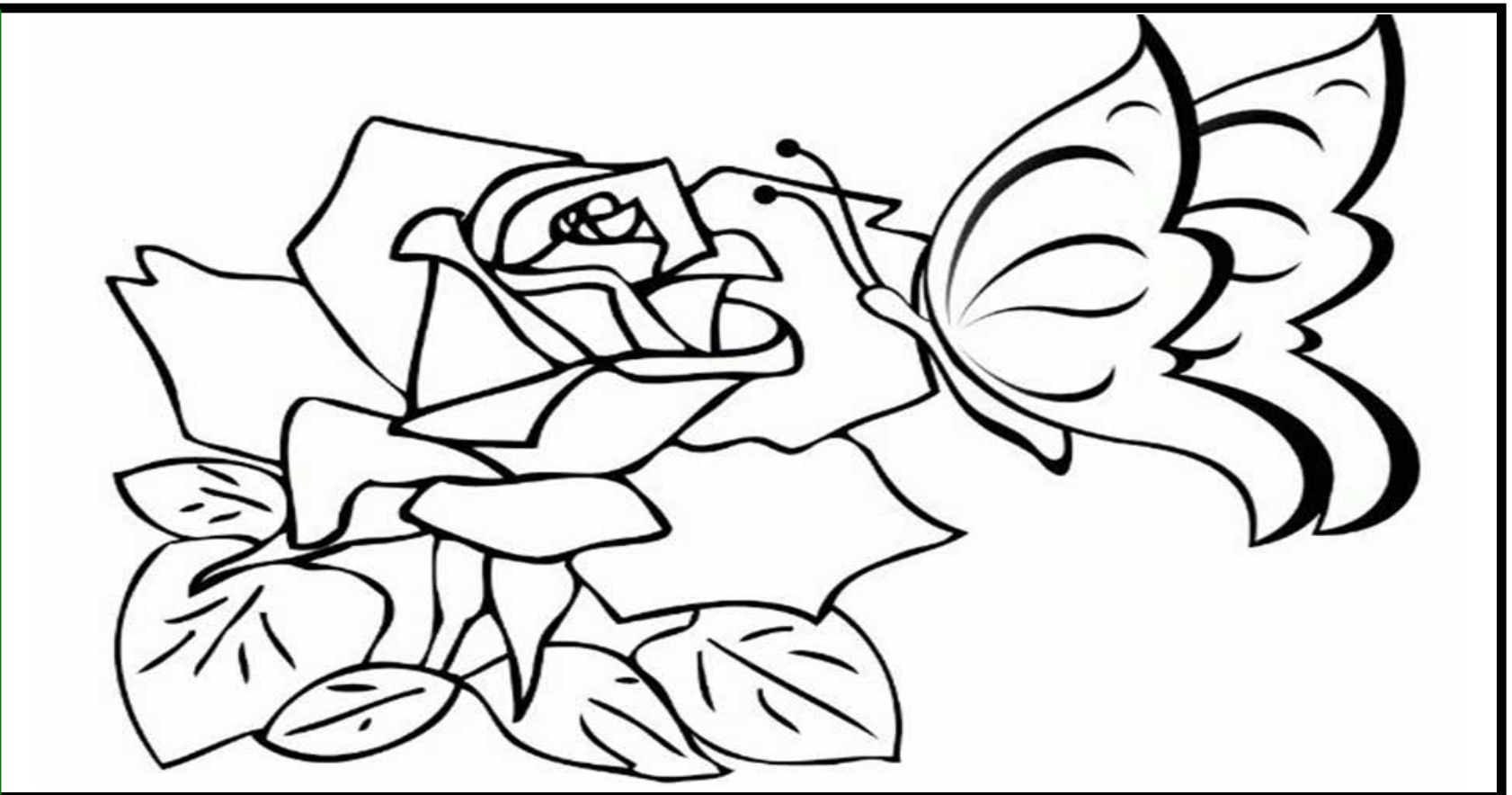
fish from nibbling on them. Leaves are anchored by submerged stalks up to 26 feet (7.9 m) long that embed themselves in the lake or river bottom. Victoria Water Lily Given that the native range of this large lily is in South America, from Bolivia in the south to Guyana in the north, one might wonder why it is called the Victoria water lily. The name was chosen in 1837 as a way to honor Queen Victoria of England who had ascended to the throne that year. The entire Victorian era was

named after the Queen, and it was during this era that exotic plants, including the Victoria water lily became popular in cultivation. Giant Water Lily Facts A giant water lily in bloom is exotic and dramatic. Like the leaves, the flowers are oversize, dinner plate-size blooms that open at night and last a few days only. Explore More The first day of a bloom, the white lily opens in the evening as a female flower, offering a sweet fragrance of pineapple. The blossom creates its own warmth, thought to be a giant water lily adaptation that lures scarab beetles to visit the flower. The second evening, the blossom closes, trapping the beetles inside. At this time the flower changes from female to male, the petals turn pink and begin to produce pollen. That evening, the blossom opens again, releasing the beetles. They are covered in the flower's pollen and fly away to pollinate female flowers.

The Victoria Water Lily leaf can hold a maximum of 65kg. Smaller adults and children can hop aboard and pose away.



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RES PUBLICA 360

Trias Politica! It's not the system; it's how you use it that matters! Part 2

By Dyon A. Elliott

Okay. Where did we leave things in Part I? In the last *Res Publica360* column, I had underscored the statistical fact that in Belize those bound by the “Payroll Vote”—as a percentage of the number of members of the House of Representatives—is significantly higher relative to that in the United Kingdom.

In making the point, it was highlighted that the UK has the “House of Commons Disqualification Act 1975.” This Act reads:

“Not more than ninety-five persons being the holders of offices specified in Schedule 2 to this Act (in this section referred to as Ministerial offices) shall be entitled to sit and vote in the House of Commons at any one time.”

In such an instance, the “ministerial” votes only make up 27% of votes among the Conservative Party members in the House of Commons, and 15% of the full Lower House (of 650 seats). By way of contrast—and acknowledging that indeed we have a smaller number of seats—in Belize the “Payroll” vote is at minimum above 70% of the seats in the Lower House (the House of Representatives).

It must be stated that the latter scenario is not unique to the current administration: This has been the status quo across both administrations, especially when there is a super-majority in the House of Representatives. Therefore, it is imperative that this matter be discussed objectively and in a non-partisan manner.

BASIC CONSTITUTIONAL PRINCIPLES

Let's begin here: At Constitutional Principles. There are at least five principles that should be enshrined in any democratic country's Supreme Law: (i) Individual Rights, (ii) Popular Sovereignty, (iii) Separation of Powers, (iv) **Checks and Balances**, and (v) Limited Government.

The first is somewhat self-explanatory, as this speaks to the protection of the fundamental rights of every citizen. Part II of Belize's Constitution covers these rights, which include the right to life, freedom, protection from inhumane treatment, and protection of your freedom of movement.

The second principle, Popular Sovereignty, is what gives us our representative democracy, as it is understood that governmental authority emanates from the people. It is for this reason the Constitution protects the “voice” of every voter.

Separation of Powers is also enshrined in the Constitution by way of the three branches of Government: The Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. Of course, in a Parliamentary Democracy, there is often criticism surrounding the blurred lines between the Legislative and Executive arms of government. This is way a relatively small “Payroll Vote” becomes important, but will return to this in a few.

Limited Government speaks to the fact that powers of government should be curtailed by the Supreme Law. From the vantage point of the rule of law, the prime minister and no other member of government can be deemed to have unlimited powers or “above the law.”

Finally, we arrive at the fifth principle: Check and Balance. I saved this one for last, as this principle is the primary focus of this *Res Publica360* entry. Fundamentally, Checks and Balances are systems designed to keep the various branches of government in line. The Legislative branch, for instance, is to oversee the executive.

BACKBENCHERS: BUILT-IN CHECK & BALANCE?

As alluded last week, one form of check and balance (CnB) that is seldom discussed in Belize is the so-called backbenchers' role in Parliament. Remember what I had said above: The Legislative arm is intended to oversee

the executive's policies. This job should not only fall to the Opposition (the minority in Parliament) but also to these “backbenchers.”

Let's use present-day examples. Currently, the People's United Party (PUP) makes up the majority, with its members holding 26 out of the 31 seats in the House of Representatives. And, given our system, the members of the Cabinet, led by the Prime Minister (who is the leader of the majority party), are likewise made up of persons from among that 26.

By definition, backbenchers are members of Parliament who are *not members of the Cabinet* and are supposedly free of the so-called “payroll vote.” But that's a fairly narrow definition.

The Institute for Government, a think tank, uses a much more liberal definition when discussing the “payroll vote:”

“The term ‘payroll vote’ has traditionally been used to describe MPs [members of parliament] who hold positions from which they would have to resign in order to oppose the government. This includes paid and unpaid positions. The term can also include roles which do not formally bind MPs to vote with the government, but may have been given out by the prime minister in order to reward or encourage loyalty. This is the wider payroll vote.”

Did you “hear” that? These paid (or unpaid) positions may “bind” Members of Parliament “to vote with the government.” And there you were, thinking that at least those non-Cabinet ministers were free to vote according to the needs and wishes of their constituencies or, at least, their conscience. Sorry.

Elliott Bulmer (2017)'s work, entitled “Government Formation and Removal Mechanisms,” does an excellent job of summarizing how authorities have worked to dilute the ability of backbenchers to be free enough to challenge their own party's policies. Bulmer (2017, p. 35) states:

“The doctrine of collective responsibility means that ministers cannot vote against the government in parliament... The ‘payroll vote,’ as it is called (because ministers are on the government's payroll), can be very influential in **securing the loyalty and obedience** of backbench parliamentarians.

“Governments may attempt to appoint oversized cabinets, or a **LARGE NUMBER OF JUNIOR MINISTERS**, to increase the influence of the payroll vote. As well as weakening parliament, this tactic can lead to a bloated inefficient government.

“To prevent this, some constitutions place limits on the number of ministers that may be appointed and hold office at any time. The Constitution of India (article 75), for example, restricts the number of ministers to 15 per cent of the total number of members of the lower house.”

BELIZE'S CONSTITUTION AND THE PAYROLL VOTE

As Bulmer (2017) highlighted, prime ministers in parliamentary democracies have an incentive to effectively “purchase obedience” and loyalty from their party folks; thereby, minimizing the possibility that non-Cabinet members of his own clan could too easily challenge the Cabinet's policies.

[It is worth keeping in mind that Belize's Constitution—since the last Constitutional reform—has anti-defection provisions which prevent “crossing the floor,” which is yet another source of protection for the prime minister of the day. But anti-defection is a topic for another time].

The Belize Constitution tries to defend against the payroll vote in section 40(2), which states:

“Provided further that the CABINET shall be comprised of, (a) not more than TWO-THIRDS of the elected Members of the party that obtains the majority

seats in the House of Representatives following the holding of a general election.”

Keeping with the current majority, that provision limits the PUP to about 17 ministers. And, of course, the administrations—past and present—have done well to satisfy that part of the law.

So, in theory, all things being equal, at least nine members of the current Majority in the House of Representatives should be free of the payroll-vote noose. And, where necessary, these free men and women could call—if even politely—their own government colleagues back into alignment with sound public policy.

But, of course, as pointed out by Bulmer (2017), this fairly weak proviso in the Supreme Law leaves the door open to Junior Ministers, or what is often called “Ministers of State.”

How so? Section 40(2) of the Constitution considers only Cabinet members, but as **section 44** of the Constitution makes plain, a “Minister of State... **SHALL NOT** be a member of Cabinet.” So, there you have it. Junior Ministers are paid from the public purse, and, therefore, whatever little flicker of criticism that could have emerged from the backbench is muffled by the expanded payroll vote. And here's the kicker! Under the current language of Section 40(2) of the Constitution, it's perfectly legal!

Please understand that this issue came up in the last Political Reform Commission of 2000. It was then PRC Commissioner and now Senate President Carolyn Trench Sandiford who offered a dissenting opinion against the PRC's decision to allow the hiring of “Junior Ministers.” Sandiford. Sandiford wrote:

“If Ministers of State are appointed from the National Assembly, they in reality and practice, become members of the Cabinet despite any constitutional amendment which may state otherwise, from the mere fact that they attend Cabinet meetings and participate in discussions, they take an oath of allegiance, and are obligated to execute the policies of the Minister of whom they are the Minister of State. This effectively and undoubtedly make them part and parcel of the cabinet, increasing the cabinet's influence in the house.”

So yeah, we've been at this mountain before.

AMENDING SECTION 40(2)?

This brings us full circle. I started this off by talking about the basic principles governing any democratic Constitution. As we move into the Constitutional reform process with those principles serving as guiding lights, the Belizean people—among many other things—will also have to examine the strength (or lack thereof) of these so-called **check-and-balance** institutions.

If we borrow from the criminologists' “broken window” concept, we could say that we ought not to let even the smallest crack in our oversight mechanisms go unattended. The payroll vote is one such small crack.

Consequently, as we move towards this extensive exercise of reviewing the Belize Constitution, this is one area that is worthy of our attention.

At minimum, it should force upon us this question: Should section 40(2) of the Constitution be amended to include not only Cabinet members but also any paid government office to which a Member of Parliament could be appointed, with the expressed goal of limiting the payroll vote?

We shall see where this issue lands on the reform agenda. For now, it could only be hoped that it will all boil down to a matter of principle for most of us.

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

A Reflection on the People's Constitutional Commission

Cont'd from pg. 4

must be educated on the current constitution, else their participation will really be manipulation by the media. The PCC "is mandated to conduct a comprehensive review of the Belize Constitution, in part

by consulting with the Belizean people to understand their opinions on what should be changed in the Constitution." But the people of Belize cannot yet give knowledgeable consent to any constitutional amendments considering that

approximately 98% of the people have not read our current constitution. First we must educate the people of Belize about our constitution and what is at stake, before asking for their opinion for what to change.

Second, for the PCC to be truly guided

by the principle of "transparency," should keep the public updated with a full list of any and all constitutional amendments being considered.

Third, the PCC claims that the Constitution "in many respects still reflects values and institutions of Belize's colonial origins over 40 years ago." The Prime Minister is a Hispanic man, however; and the Governor General is a Mayan woman. Precisely "what colonial values and institutions" is there "strong support for reviewing?" Those who consider the office of Governor General as odious to

Belizean sovereignty and pride, should remember that Australia, Canada, and other Commonwealth countries consent to having a Governor General appointed by their monarch, indeed taking security and pride in this.

Fourth, there are some concerns that a new constitution will infringe on the independence or influence of the Church. The people of Belize may not know what they believe about their constitution, but they do believe in the Christian God (approximately 40% Catholic, 30% Protestant). Pope John Paul II's visit to Belize, 9 March 1983, drew a crowd of 30,000 to the airport where he celebrated Mass, the largest crowd in Belizean history.¹

If anything, this is evidence of the democratic will of the people of Belize. The Right Honorable Prime Minister George Price, who privately spoke with Pope JP II on his visit, said in an interview with CaribNation TV: "Every right must have a duty, every duty must have a right," and "In everything, there is the law of God. There are the Commandments which we must respect. ... And these principles are incorporated into the laws of Belize. ... Our Constitution acknowledges the supremacy of God, that's the first thing. And from that acknowledgement, that recognition, stems all the things that follow. There is a God, and if there is a God then there must be right and wrong, and we must do the right, and avoid the wrong."² Any democratic constitution will reflect Belize's Christian soul.

Fifth, there are a number of problems with the vague proposition that a new constitution might provide free education and

healthcare and increased women's rights. First, the Constitution already defends equal access to education, healthcare, and political participation regardless of ethnicity, creed, or sex. If promising such rights in the current constitution is not sufficient, then how will promising the right in a new constitution be so?

Second, a basic understanding of economics is sufficient to demonstrate that "free" education and healthcare does not exist. What we must assume is that at least government may have to raise taxes to pay for public education and healthcare.

Third, even if taxes were raised to pay for public education and healthcare, by order of a new constitution, it would not necessarily actually improve conditions. "Free/Public" does not mean "good quality." Whatever improvement Belize needs in gender and racial equality, and access to healthcare and education, needs to be made in the execution of the current constitution and laws, not in changing the constitution itself.

Again, we agree that a constitutional revision is in order. Its difficulty is surely a factor in why so few Belizeans have read it. A comparison to the texts of other nations' constitutions shows that in many cases the same rights and regulations may be codified in half the words currently used. But simplifying the text is only half the battle. For an active and healthy Democracy, the people of Belize must be better educated - and informed - in the functioning of their nation's government, so that their involvement may be effective. I pray the PCC and all Belizeans who love democracy, God, and their country, consider these reflections for the good of the nation.


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Therefore, all transactions involving the purchase and sale of all United States monetary instruments, including currency notes, must be conducted as follows:

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BZ\$2.00	BZ\$2.0063	BZ\$2.00	BZ\$2.0175

Note that this change aligns the buying rates for US currency notes and other monetary instruments at BZ\$2.00 to US\$1.00.

The Central Bank of Belize encourages individuals and firms to transact their holdings of United States currency and monetary instruments with an authorised dealer, subject to regulations under the Money Laundering and Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2020.

- ENDS -

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G7 leaders gather on China's doorstep to seek unified response to Beijing's threat

As leaders of seven of the world's most powerful democracies gather in Japan on Friday, it will be the authoritarian powers of China and Russia that dominate the agenda.

The annual Group of Seven (G7) summit, convening this year in Hiroshima, will seek to project a unified response to an increasingly assertive China – and the perceived threat it poses to the stability and economic security of a world already shaken by Russia's ongoing war on Ukraine.

While much of the attention will be focused on Ukraine – including how to further tighten the screws on Russia and defuse rising nuclear tensions – the three-day summit also provides an opportunity for G7 leaders to recalibrate and coordinate their approach toward China, which has refused to condemn the invasion and instead bolstered ties with Moscow.

“Basically this is going to be a meeting for them to talk about how to deal with Chi-

na and Russia,” said Yasuhiro Matsuda, an international relations professor at the University of Tokyo.

But agreeing on a common approach to the world's second largest economy will not be an easy task.

China, a global manufacturing hub and a huge consumer market, is an important trade partner to the G7 countries, which is comprised of the United States, Japan, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Italy.

Projecting unity on China comes at a crucial moment for the US and its allies, as Beijing ramps up diplomatic efforts to repair ties with Europe and drive a wedge in the transatlantic alliance.

Last month, French President Emmanuel Macron caused consternation in Western capitals after he said, following a warm visit to Beijing, that Europe must not become “just America's followers” and get “caught up in crises that are not ours” when asked about the prospect of China in-

vading Taiwan.

Days later, in an effort to present a united front on Taiwan, the G7 foreign ministers said in a preparatory meeting for the summit that there was “no change” in the bloc's position on the self-ruled democratic island, which the Chinese Communist Party claims sovereignty over despite never having controlled.

The top diplomats called on China to “abstain from threats, coercion, intimidation, or the use of force” and “reaffirmed” the importance of “peace and stability” across the Taiwan Strait as an “indispensable element in security and prosperity in the international community.”

Japan, the host of this year's G7 summit and its only Asian member, will position regional security on the summit's main agenda, said Matsuda at the University of Tokyo.

Deeply concerned about Beijing's military posturing in the region, Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida has warned publicly that “Ukraine today may be

East Asia tomorrow.”

In response to growing threats from China, Japan has moved to double its military spending and is in talks to open a NATO liaison office – the first of its kind in Asia and a sign of deepening ties between Western and Asian democracies.

In a move that highlighted Tokyo's concerns, China sent a naval flotilla – led by one of its most powerful destroyers – on a 12-day circumnavigation of Japan's main islands in a display of military power in the lead-up to the G7 summit.

Another important theme of the summit will be economic security, including how to counter China's economic pressure tactics.

At a meeting of G7 finance ministers in Japan last week, US Treasury secretary Janet Yellen called for “coordinated action” by G7 nations against Beijing's use of “economic coercion.”

At the front of the push for economic “de-risking” is the US, which has curbed Beijing's access to advanced semiconductors and the equipment used to make them. It is also seeking to impose new restrictions on outbound investment in China.

But there is the question of how far other countries are willing to follow through.

Japan and the Netherlands have joined the US in the chip curbs, but most countries remain skeptical about the investment controls.

“The problem is all the countries are competing with each other over China's market, so Beijing's divide and rule strategy has been working very well,” Matsuda said.

In an effort to expand the G7's influence beyond the club of rich democracies, Japan has

invited leaders from a long list of developing countries, including India, Brazil, Vietnam and Indonesia, to attend the summit as observers.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol will also join the gathering. Following years of disputes and a long history of acrimony with Japan, the two neighbors are now mending their ties due to growing threats from North Korea and rising concerns about China.

In a sign of a growing trilateral alliance, the US, Japan and South Korea will meet on the sidelines of the summit to discuss plans for the real-time sharing of intelligence – which will further deepen China's fears of encirclement by the US and its allies.

And with US President Joe Biden cutting short of his Asia trip to address a debt limit crisis, a summit of Quad leaders from the US, India, Australia and Japan could now take also place in Hiroshima instead. The informal security dialogue is widely seen as a counter to China's aggressive posture in the region.

As the G7 summit gets underway, Chinese officials will be closely watching from Beijing and will not hide their displeasure, experts say.

In the lead-up to the summit, Beijing has already berated a statement by G7 foreign ministers.

Similarly, Beijing also lashed out at accusations of its “economic coercion,” claiming it is the “victim of US economic coercion” rather than a perpetrator.

And while China is not invited to Hiroshima, it is hosting its own summit with Central Asia countries, experts noted.

- Al Jazeera

Millions in Mexico warned to prepare for evacuation as Popocatepetl volcano spews

Millions of people in Mexico have been warned to prepare for a possible evacuation after increased activity from the country's most dangerous active volcano, which has been spewing ash into several nearby towns since last week, according to authorities.

Ash from Popocatepetl volcano, which is in a central part of the country, has delayed flights in Mexico City and led authorities to close schools in dozens of municipalities.

Some 25 million people live in a 60-mile radius of the volcano, which is about 45 miles southeast of Mexico City and located between the states of Morelos, Puebla and state of Mexico.

On Sunday, the National Civil Protection Coordination (CNPC) increased its volcanic threat level to “yellow phase 3,” which calls on some 3 million people who live in towns and villages adjacent to the volcano to stay alert and prepare for a possible evacuation.

The CNPC also warned of greater volcanic activity and the dispersion of ash into several nearby

towns at high speed. It also recommended that residents nearby avoid outdoor activities.

“In the case of Mexico City, the risk is ash fall. We are prepared for that scenario and we know what to do. Let's stay alert,” Mexico city's mayor Claudia Sheinbaum said in a tweet on Sunday.

Mexico City's Benito Juárez International Airport (AICM) was temporarily closed on Saturday and some flights were delayed on Monday due to the presence of volcanic ash, according to airport authorities.

State authorities have also suspended in-person classes in schools across 40 municipalities in Puebla, five municipalities in the state of Mexico and seven in Tlaxcala and said the classes will be held remotely.

The volcano had been dormant for decades until it erupted in 1994. Since then, its rumblings have become a part of daily life for residents.

- CNN

Pupil suspected of starting deadly blaze over 'confiscated phone'

A deadly fire at a school dormitory in Guyana appears to have been started by a pupil who was angry her mobile phone had been confiscated, officials say.

Nineteen people - mostly female students - were killed in the blaze in the South American country in the early hours of Monday.

The dorm was reportedly locked and had covered windows which trapped victims.

The teenage suspect is currently in hospital with burns, and has reportedly admitted to the arson.

Authorities are

now taking advice on whether to charge her, according to a government source who spoke to the AFP news agency.

The fire was started in the bathroom area and eventually tore through the whole building, which was partially made of wood and was housing 57 pupils at the time. As well as the victims who died - most of whom were indigenous girls - several other people were injured.

They were taken to hospital and a number of them remain in a serious condition.

- BBC

GRASSROOTS

HON GILROY USHER'S SUCCESSFUL MOTHER'S PROGRAM IN PORT LOYOLA



By Hon. Gilroy Usher

“A mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take.” – Cardinal Mermillod

The annual Mother's Day Program of Hon. Gilroy Usher Area Representative for Port Loyola on Sunday was a tremendous success.

Over 200 mothers from across the division had a wonderful time with exciting games, dancing contest, tribute to mothers, prizes for the eldest mother and youngest “expecting” mother in attendance, as well as raffles including the grand prize of a washing machine. The activity to determine which mother in each of two sets wished a happy Mother's Day to all mothers with love, energy, and passion was also a great energizer for the crowd.

The event was held at the basketball court across from the Muslim School on Central American Blvd. in Belize City.

Sincere thanks to the M.C. for the program, the mothers in attendance, Mr. Norman Usher -Chairman PUP Port Loyola Committee, the staff of the campaign office, the sponsors, and all others, whose tremendous efforts made the Mother's Day program a very

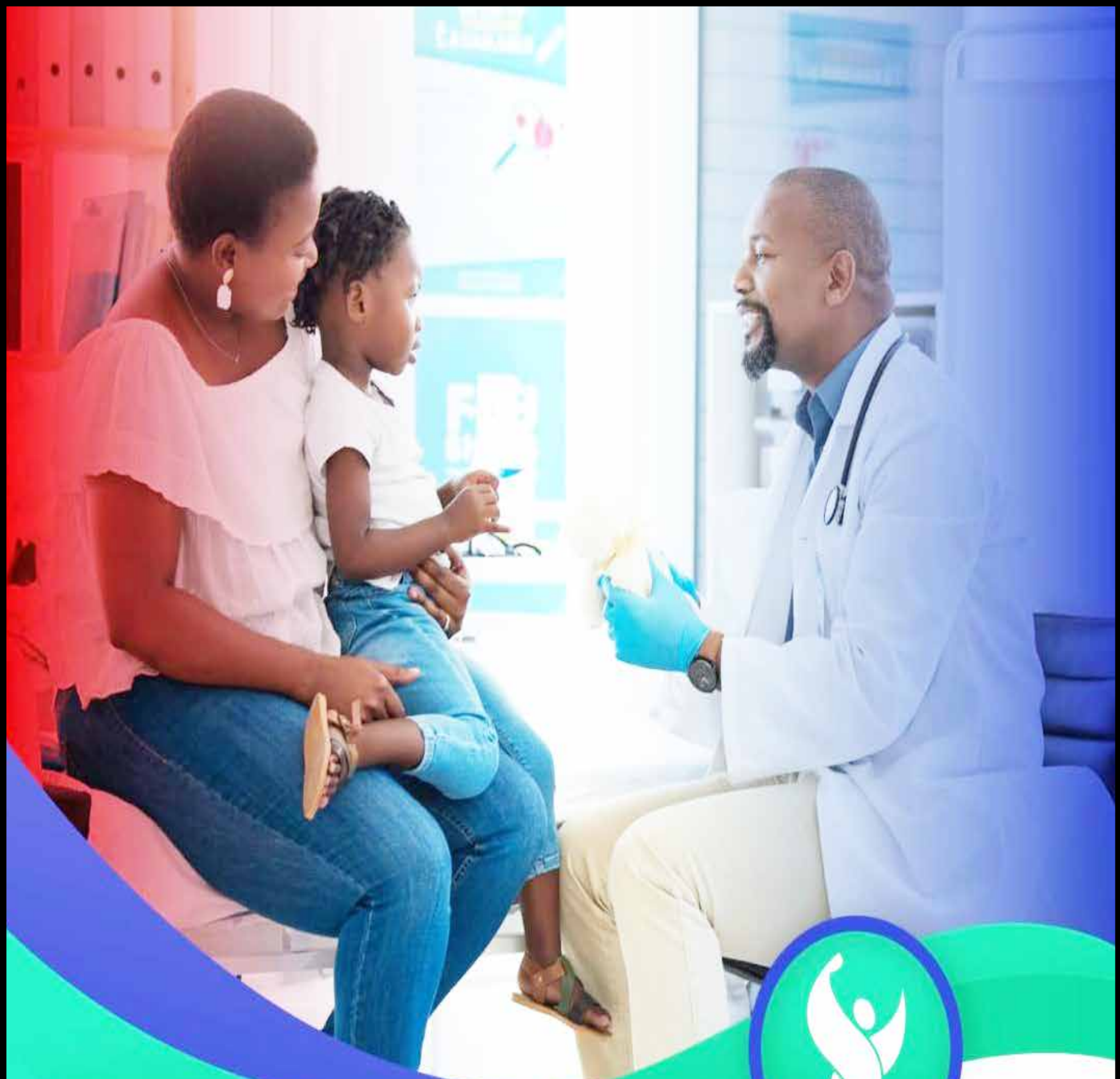
successful event.

Disclaimer: the opinions expressed by our columnists are theirs alone, and are not necessarily

reflective of the newspaper's stance on the issues touched. We believe it is critical that our columnists be

allowed freedom to generate discussion through their expressions on any number of topics.





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Scholarships are awarded based on financial need and academic merit in addition to the following minimum requirements:

-  Applicant must be a Belizean citizen or a child of a Belizean citizen and residing in Belize for at least three (3) consecutive years.
-  Applicant must be a full-time student of a recognized educational institution by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology of Belize (MOECST).
-  Applicant must be entering high school for the first time.
-  Applicant must have an average score of 80% or its equivalent GPA for Standard 4, 5 and 6

Applications can be found at: www.livedigi.com/scholarship-application-program

NOTE: Staff and their immediate family are not eligible for Digi Scholarships



**MINISTRY
OF
INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT
AND HOUSING**



PROCUREMENT NOTICE

UPGRADING OF BULLET TREE ROAD

The Government of Belize (GOB), through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH), intends to upgrade the **Bullet Tree Road** from its intersection with **Joseph Andrews Drive in San Ignacio, Cayo District, to Bullet Tree Village (approximately 3.0 Miles) using Hot-Mix Asphalt Cement.**

Provided there are no delays, construction is expected to start in the Third Quarter of 2023. The MIDH hereby invites interested qualified contractors with experience in road construction with emphasis in Hot-Mix Asphalt Cement (HMAC) pavement to participate in this process.

The Project is being implemented by the MIDH, Project Execution Unit (PEU). An Engineering Coordinator within the PEU will be responsible for the day-to-day management of project activities.

The Scope of Works refers to:

- Minor earthworks
- Culvert installation and drainage improvements
- Granular sub-base and basecourse pavement rehabilitation
- Construction of hot-mix asphalt concrete surfacing
- Road marking, Furniture & Miscellaneous Works

Consideration will be given to local firms who have qualified extensive experience in road construction of a similar nature, size and complexity.

Minimum Qualification Criteria:

- Provision of audited financial statements for 3 years between 2019 and 2022
- General Construction Experience: 10 Years
- Specific Construction Experience in the placement of Hot-Mix Asphalt Cement (HMAC)
- Contract Management Experience: 10 Years
- Construction Experience in a Project of Similar Size and Complexity (one)
- Access to Line of Credit: \$500,000.00
- Average annual turnover of minimum: Bz\$1.5 Million
- Qualified registered Engineer: 10 years' experience (5 years registered)

Effective **Monday 29 May 2023**, Bidding Documents are available at a cost of **Bz\$1,000.00** from the address below.

There are two options for submitting the bidding information. These are:

- (a) By electronic submission, in pdf format, to the email address indicated below. The submission will be deemed to have been received at the time that it is received by the PEU. The burden of proving receipt of the email will be on the applicant and will not be met solely by a read receipt or sent items report generated by the bidder's computer.; or
- (b) By submission of one original and three hard copies, by hand or by registered mail, in a sealed envelope to the address below. The sealed envelope containing each submission must include the name and address of the applicant.

All Bidding Documents properly completed should reach the office of the Chief Engineer at the address below no later than **Monday 12 June 2023 at 10:00 am**. The Ministry shall not be bound to assign any reason for not post-qualifying any contractor and shall not accept responsibility for any cost incurred by the applicants.

**Attention: Mr. Evondale Moody
Chief Engineer
Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing
Power Lane, Belmopan
BELIZE C.A.
Tel: +501-828-5220
Email: peu@midh.gov.bz**



MINISTRY OF INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING



PROCUREMENT NOTICE

CONCRETE PAVING OF STREETS IN BELIZE CITY

The Government of Belize (GOB), through the Ministry of Infrastructure Development and Housing (MIDH), intends to upgrade three streets in Belize City to concrete paved standards, namely:

1. **Lacroix Boulevard**
2. **Complex Avenue**
3. **Neal's Pen Road**

Lacroix Boulevard will comprise the upgrading to concrete paved standards of this Boulevard from its intersection with George Price Highway along Lopez Street - Lacroix Boulevard to Haulover Creek, which is approximately 1,267 meters.

Complex Avenue will comprise the upgrading to concrete paved standards of this Avenue from its intersection with Mahogany Street to Lacroix Boulevard, which is approximately 595 meters.

Neal's Pen Road will comprise the upgrading to concrete paved standards of this Road from its intersection with Central American Boulevard to Fabers Road, which is approximately 1,270 meters.

Provided there are no delays, construction is expected to start in the Third Quarter of 2023. The MIDH hereby invites interested contractors in the civil works to be part of this bidding process.

The Project is being implemented by the MIDH, Project Execution Unit (PEU). An Engineering Coordinator within the PEU will be responsible for the day-to-day management of project activities.

The Scope of Works refers to:

- Preparation of granular road base
- Drainage improvements
- Formwork and reinforcement setting and concreting
- Roadmarking, Furniture & Miscellaneous Works

Consideration will be given to local firms who have qualified extensive experience in road construction of a similar size and complexity.

Minimum Qualification Criteria:

- Provision of audited financial statements for 3 years between 2019 and 2022
- General Construction Experience: 10 Years
- Specific Construction Experience in the construction of rigid (concrete) pavement
- Contract Management Experience: 10 Years
- Construction Experience in a Project of Similar Size and Complexity (one)
- Access to Line of Credit: \$500,000.00
- Average annual turnover of minimum: Bz\$1.5 Million
- Qualified registered Engineer: 10 years' experience (5 years registered)

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WORLD BANK GROUP

SPECIFIC PROCUREMENT NOTICE REQUEST FOR BIDS - WORKS

One Envelope Bidding Process

Energy Resilience for Climate Adaptation (ERCAP)

The Government of Belize (GOB) has been allocated grant funds (the Grant) from the Global Environmental Facility (GEF), which are administered by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (World Bank) and executed by Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Service, Energy and Public Utility (MPSEPU) and the National Meteorological Service (NMS), in an amount equivalent to USD 8 million, towards the cost of an Energy Resilience and Climate Change Adaptation Project. A portion of the proceeds of the Grant will be applied to eligible payments under the contract for which this specific procurement notice is issued. Payments by the World Bank will be made only at the request of BEL, and upon approval by the World Bank, and will be subject in all respects to the terms and conditions of the Grant Agreement. The Grant Agreement prohibits withdrawal from the financing account for the purpose of any payment to persons or entities, or for any import of goods, if such payment or import, to the knowledge of the World Bank, is prohibited by a decision of the United Nations Security Council taken under Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations. No party other than GOB shall derive any rights from the Grant Agreement or have any claim to the proceeds of the Grant.

BEL now invites electronic Bids from eligible Bidders for the Civil works and supply of manpower for the installation of a) hydro-meteorological automatic weather stations, b) rainfall stations, and c) automatic weather stations.

Bidding will be conducted through National Competitive Bidding (NCB) using a Request for Bids (RFB) as specified in the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers" dated January 2011 (revised July 2014) ("Procurement Guidelines") and is open to all eligible Bidders as defined in the Procurement Guidelines.

Interested eligible Bidders may obtain further information from the following person:

Ms. Carolyn L. Crawford
Procurement Consultant
ERCAP Project Management Unit
Belize Electricity Limited
Email: Carolyn.Crawford@bel.com.bz

The bidding document in English may be requested by interested Bidders upon the submission of a written application to the address above. The document will be sent electronically upon this request.

Bids must be received at the email address below on or before **Wednesday, May 31, 2023, by 3:00 p.m. and will be opened at 3:15 p.m. sharp Belize time.**

Submission of bids by electronic email (EM):

A PDF copy of the bid should be submitted by EM. The PDF copy should be encrypted, or password protected. The email should not be encrypted but only the attachment shall be encrypted, or password protected.

The procedure for submission of bid is:

- A. The zipped file is to be sent to Manager, Procurement Department at **bidsubmittal@bel.com.bz**.
- B. Password or encryption key should be sent along with the bid to the same bid submission email address listed below.
- C. Bidders will receive a confirmation email from BEL once their bid is received.
- D. Bidders should ensure that the bid document(s) are not corrupt or affected by any computer virus that may possibly deny access to the files. BEL will not be responsible for such corrupt files which may deny access during the bid opening process.
- E. The maximum file size for each email will be 30 MB. Any email with an attachment above this size will bounce back. Hence, Bidders must ensure the attachments do not exceed 30 MB.
- F. Email submissions should be clearly labelled in their subject with the following: **Bid for Weather Stations Installation – ERCAP – "include Bidders name or Company name"**.

Bids submitted electronically shall only be opened publicly at the Bid Opening time mentioned above on May 31, 2023, in the presence of Bidders and/or their representatives who have submitted a bid. Bid opening will be held virtually using Microsoft (MS) Teams. The link to the MS-Teams bid opening invite will be shared with all Bidders prior to the bid opening date and all Bidders are encouraged to participate therein. Late Bids shall be rejected.

All Bids must be accompanied by a Bid-Securing Declaration.

The address referred to above is:

Manager
Procurement Department
Belize Electricity Limited
2 ½ Miles Phillip Goldson Highway
Belize City, Belize
Email: bidsubmittal@bel.com.bz
Telephone: +501-227-0954

BEL reserves the right to reject late bids or to cancel the bid opening session in its entirety. It will not be bound to assign any reason for not engaging the services of any Bidder and will not defray any costs incurred by any Bidder in the preparation and submission of their bid.