

Reporter

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Draft Constitution needs to go to referendum: People's Constitution Chairman



Members of the People's Constitution Commission at inaugural meeting held on Thursday, November 24, 2022

The Belizean people should be made to vote on a draft Constitution and not

just a summary of the People's Constitution Commission (PCC)'s report, PCC Chairman

Anthony Chanona told *The Reporter* Thursday. Chanona, who

says the PCC Act can benefit from some amendments, underscored the

fact that the current language of Section 22 of the Act "is not clear" as to what the end

product of the process will be in terms of what will go to referendum.

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Guatemala replies to Belize's ICJ submission, Belize to respond June 2023



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According to the schedule, December 8th 2022 was Guatemala's deadline to reply.

As World observes 'Anti-Corruption Day' Belize still not scored on corruption index



By Britney Gordon

After 14 years of exclusion, Belize still has not met the data collection requirements to be included in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (CPI).

The continued absence from the CPI

looms over Belize as the world celebrates 19th "Anti-Corruption Day" on Friday, December 9th, 2022.

Speaking on the matter with The Reporter, President of The National Trade Union Congress of Belize (NTUCB) Luke Martinez said that

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Draft Constitution needs to go to referendum...

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"The law is broad," Chanona admonished. "This is a concern because at the end of this process and after all resources have been expended, the product from the PCC should be beyond all doubt."

Particularly, the PCC Chairman was referencing Section 22 of the Act which reads:

"A referendum shall be conducted where the National Assembly passes a resolution declaring that the matter stated in the report, whether the Belize Constitution should be repealed and replaced or amended, is of sufficient national importance that it should be submitted to the electors for their view through a referendum."

The general interpretation of that section suggests

that only the recommendation to either amend or repeal and replace the existing Constitution will be put before the people of Belize. This, however, leaves unanswered the matter as to whom or which body shall be responsible for ultimately "translating" the contents of the PCC's report into the draft text of the amended or new Supreme Law.

"It should not be left in the realm of the political executive to interpret what is in the report," the PCC Chairman cautioned. "I think we could get into a political football and political mischief if that happens. Remember [around that time] we'd be pretty much close to the next general election."

To address this gap in the law, Chanona suggested that a remedy

would be simply to amend Section 23 of the Act in such a way so as to allow the PCC to continue working until the referendum on a draft Constitution is concluded.

"Instead of having the politicians determine what is in the report, it might perhaps be best not to dissolve the Commission," he advised. "Have the Commission defend its work all the way to the referendum, rather than having it in a political realm that could undo all the hard work that the commission would have done. That's another area that requires amendment. ... To give this work the best chance in a referendum is to have the PCC defend its work and not stand down and dissolved."

In terms of the PCC's dissolution, the Chairman was

citing Section 23 of the PCC Act that says that the PCC shall "stand dissolved upon the submission of the report to the Prime Minister ... or on the expiration of the term of the Commission."

Chanona also indicated that he will also seek the support of all Commissioners on these matters, and he shared that he will do his part to communicate the need for these changes to the government.

Notwithstanding the aforementioned concerns, the Chairman did not describe the current language as grounds for abandoning the work. "Nevertheless, we will work with what we have, but as we progress, I will try to impress on the powers that be that there is a need that these areas of the law be revisited."

Belizeans and others who love Belize have become increasingly alarmed at the level of gun violence prevailing in our country.

Two men were shot and killed last weekend when they crossed a red line and went into an unfriendly part of Southside Belize City.

They were sitting in their car when a gunman approached and opened fire, killing both men.

Recently a police woman was shot in the head and died from her injury, and earlier an unexplained raid on a bar in Hopkins resulted in a policeman being shot along with his commanding officer.

When countries run amuck and people begin to take the law into their own hands it leads to a collapse of civilized behavior and a meltdown of our democratic system.

If there is no vigorous and adequate response from law enforcement, the situation proceeds rapidly downhill leading to a loss of civil liberties, as we see happening in Haiti at this time.

The response to gun violence calls for severe penalties for any person who deliberately kills another person, or who conspires to kill or who encourages someone to kill or seriously injure another person.

We cannot afford to become complacent about murder and gun violence, but this is precisely what seems to be happening in our country. Gang influence has become such a force that politicians looking for support actively woo these people and try to become their friends.

Gang people with guns are making and enforcing their own laws, and will attack even the police if provoked. They have become the grim reapers of our land, causing people to live in fear and mourning.

But if we cannot prevent the carnage, we can at least make the perpetrators pay a heavy price for their crimes. This means newer, more stringent laws, better law enforcement and prosecution, and a judicial system prepared to hand down severe penalties.

We don't have to re-invent any wheels here! We know what works and what doesn't. Indifference and acceptance do not work!

Does the Government of Belize have a plan to combat gun violence? If so, would the Minister of National Security please tell us what it is?

This is important if we want to retain our democracy and relaxed way of life.

As World observes 'Anti-Corruption Day' Belize still not scored on corruption index

Cont'd from pg. 1

there has been little progress made towards achieving the desired results as it pertains to the anti-corruption movement. As a case in point, Martinez lamented the "late appointment" of the Integrity Commission.

In terms of campaign finance reform, Martinez added that the NTUCB submitted a draft of the campaign finance bill which has not been tabled at the National Assembly.

"You cannot focus on restructuring debt if you're not able to address corruption," Martinez remarked. "Your finances and your national debt go hand in hand with the legislation that strengthens the legal framework when it comes to corruption."

International Anti-Corruption Day, which was first observed in October 2003, is a day set aside for the raising of public awareness of the need for anti-corruption efforts and for recommitting to

transparency.

A nation's level of corruption can be measured through Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index; which, through a combination of at least three data sources drawn from 13 different corruption surveys and assessments, calculates a nation's corruption perception score based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be.

The score ranges from 0 to 100, with lower scores equating to higher levels of corruption. However, the last time Belize was included in this Index was in 2008, when it scored 28 points and ranked 109 out of 180 nations.

In 2020, Belize committed to implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), the only legally binding international anti-corruption multilateral treaty, which aims to reduce the risks of corruption and

mismanagement. It requires the involvement of strong anti-corruption bodies, better oversight bodies, a more open and transparent public procurement, and enhanced anti-corruption compliance.

The UNCAC's article 61 (2) states: "State Parties shall consider developing and sharing with each

other and through international and regional organizations statistics, analytical expertise concerning corruption and information with a view to developing, insofar as possible, common definitions, standards, and methodologies, as well as information on best practices to prevent and combat corruption."

THE REPORTER

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Belize benefits from innovative Taiwanese programs

By *Lisbeth Ayuso*

Belize established and has maintained diplomatic relations with Taiwan since 1989. This relationship has resulted in extraordinary gains for Belize, witnessed in the myriad programs initiated by Taiwan and the millions of dollars pumped into the Belizean economy. Today a significant number of programs are currently in different stages of completion, of which a handful stand out.

All projects are carried out by the Taiwan Technical Mission in Belize. The Mission's primary focus is to boost socio-economic development, enhance human resources and promote economic relations in developing, partner countries. This arm of the embassy currently has a 5-year program in place which highlight five key projects.

The first is a Cooperation Agreement between Taiwan, Guatemala, Honduras, and Belize for the prevention and control of the Fusarium Tropical Race 4 pathogen (Foc TR4 disease) that attacks the plants' roots in Central America. This project was signed on November 10 and is expected to be completed in August of 2025.

The Foc TR4 disease is found in the soil causing the Banana Fusarium Wilt disease by clogging its vascular system. The fungus can survive for over a month in the soil, and to date, no cure has been found.

The project seeks to prevent and address the Foc TR4 disease with Taiwanese experts in the form of face-to-face forums and technical training sessions for all three countries. Taiwan will also introduce an Foc

TR4-resistant variety and follow up with observation trials. Upon completing the observation period, they will register the variety and commence legal structures for commercial production, laying the foundation for a Taiwanese disease-resistant variety to enter the Latin America market and generate business opportunities for the region.

The second program benefits business women in post-Covid times. Approved to run between August 1, 2021 to June 30, 2023, the 15-month project was launched in October, and promises to promote women's entrepreneurship and social inclusion through financial and technical collaborations. The women-led micro, small, and medium enterprises will gain from extensive professional and vocational training, business incubation programmes, financial relief counselling, and a bolstered national network of support.

In response to the needs for Mandarin learning proposed by ROC (Taiwan) and friendly countries, Taiwan has dispatched professional Mandarin teachers to Haiti, Honduras, Guatemala, Palau, Paraguay, St.

Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Christopher (St. Kitts) and Nevis, Belize, Turkey, and Jordan to provide Mandarin teaching services and promote Taiwanese culture overseas, thereby improving bilateral relations.

The University of Belize, Mopan Technical High School, Galen University, National Police Training Academy, Belize Defense Force, San Pedro Town Council are all participants in the project. Upon completing the course, all Mandarin students in Belize can take the official test from the Ministry of Education in Taiwan. This test ranks their Mandarin level, allowing students the ability to use the certificates for job hunting or further education.

The fourth project seeks to interconnect rural communities digitally. Dubbed the "Digital Inclusion Program," this project hopes to create new opportunities for isolated communities due to low digital literacy, give access to ICT (Information and Communication Technology), and information. In order to close the gap, five digital labs will be created, which will carry out five basic computer workshops

and an advanced digital bootcamp.

The villages of Carmelita, Santa Martha, Belmopan, San Narciso, and Bullet Tree have been selected for this mission and have been outfitted with computer equipment to get the job done. The program will not only enhance the lives of those part taking in the training but will also help to create new job opportunities for those providing the equipment and repairs for the selected centers, which in the near future will require continuous maintenance.

Even livestock producers will benefit from Taiwan's expertise and knowledge, via the Sheep and Goat Production and Guidance System Enhancement Project, which aims to improve sheep breeding and productivity in Belize through the National Breeding Center. Between training workshops, observation meetings, the training seed instructors and bolstering a supply of high-quality breeding sheep and goats, this project aims to improve the quality of livestock in the country.

By doing so, sheep farmers will be able to increase profits and encourage others to join the sheep industry or

expand their ranch scale. It is anticipated that the Belizean sheep industry enhanced by these two projects can become one of the driving forces of Belize's economic growth.

The fifth project, and one which most Belizeans can identify with is the Medical Imaging System Project. This project aims to increase efficiency in the radiology unit of the public hospitals, in order to improve the accessibility of medical imaging service in the districts.

Instead of developing film images, this project modernizes imaging digitally and stores them in an archiving and communications system (PACS) in selected hospitals in order to develop the necessary radiological information system (RIS). Installing this system requires training for medical personnel and Taiwan is providing all expertise on this project.

Combined all projects cost an estimated US\$8.5 million to implement. Each project is carried out in stages and a pre-estimated amount is paid out at each stage of the project. All expertise and monies are provided by the Taiwan and are supported by Belizeans at each stage.



PRAYER TO THE HOLY SPIRIT

O Holy Spirit, you who are the fountainhead of all knowledge, who illuminate the pathway which enables me to reach my goal. You who share your divine gift permitting me to forgive and forget past insults and injustices, and who are always at my side within reaching distance. I desire in this short supplication to thank you for all that you have done for me; and to assure you once more that I never want to be separated from you, I along with my loved ones, cradled in your unending love. Thank you for your never-failing kindness towards me and those I call my own.

(Prayer to be offered for three consecutive days; faith in the Holy Spirit will cause Him to respond to your request no matter how difficult the problem might be. Publish prayer as soon as request has been granted).

R.D.C.

Guatemala replies to Belize's ICJ Submission, Belize to respond June 2023

By *Michelle Sutherland*

Guatemala has presented their second-round reply to the International Court of Justice for the territorial

claim that the country has against Belize, a statement from the Guatemalan Government confirmed Thursday.

The Guatemala government's statement said, "Guatemala's reply reflects all the factual and legal elements that assist the Guatemalan claim, maintained throughout the dispute."

The Guatemalan Foreign Ministry's statement added, "[The document is] the result of a meticulous and professional process by a team made up of experts of the highest reputation and who represent and defend the interests of Guatemala in international litigation."

The submission met the December 8th deadline that was established from June this year. Belize will now have until June 8th 2023 to submit a rejoinder.

Following Belize's filing earlier this year, in his

comments to the House of Representatives, Prime Minister John Briceño said, "Belize will have six months thereafter to deliver our rejoinder, so that by June 2023 we expect the written pleadings in the case to have closed. This, of course, assumes that there will be no further events or eventualities that might delay this case."

The Prime Minister went on to comment that assuming that there is no further delay in the process, the court will then proceed to set a date for the hearing, which is to occur in 2024 if not before. A press release following Belize's filing also assured Belizeans that Belize's counter-memorial had made a robust defense of Belize's sovereignty over its entire territory including islands and the pertaining maritime areas in accordance with international law.

Previously, the court, due to the pandemic,

was forced to make some adjustments to its timetable and based on the request of the Guatemalan Government had initially pushed the deadline for Guatemala to submit its memorial from June 8th, 2020 to December 8, 2020, while Belize's deadline was also moved from June 8th, 2021 to June 8th, 2022.

The ICJ, located in Hague, Netherland, became the official arbiter of the dispute in June 2019, following an April 2018 referendum in Guatemala and an April 2019 referendum in Belize, during which both countries' citizens voted "yes" to settle the dispute once and for all before the ICJ.

Despite multiple attempts, The Reporter was unable to obtain comments from officials within Belize's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for comments.

CLASSIFIED ADS

VACANCY: PRINCESS ENTERTAINMENT BELIZE LTD. TWO (2) Surveillance Technician needed. Camera technicians must be able to control cameras with a high degree of operational and technical knowledge. **No phone calls**, Applicant can drop off application letter at **Front desk of Princess Casino**. Addressed to the **Human Resource Manager**.

VACANCY: Industrial Engineering Consultant. Need **three (3) Engineers:** Master in Energy Efficiency: The Energy Engineer focus on the auditing and management of energy efficiency and renewable projects related to the identification and quantification of energy and water efficiency opportunities associated with new and existing buildings across all systems, equipment and energy producing structures including, but not limited to, HVAC and central energy plants, lighting, controls, and automation. **Must be bilingual speak** and under stand **Spanish and English.** Can call **626-6236** for an interview.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that **Mildred Nellie Alvarez** of #12 St. Vincent Street, Dangriga Town, Stann Creek District is hereby applying for a renewal for **Shop Liquor License** for **Nellie's Cool Spot**. Situate at **#12 St. Vincent Street, Dangriga Town, Stann Creek District for the year 2023.** Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

LIQUOR LICENSE NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that **Edwin Martinez** of Camalote Village, Cayo District is hereby applying for a renewal for **Shop Liquor License** for **Z&Z Shop**. Situate in **Camalote Village, Cayo District for the year 2023.** Under the Intoxicating Liquor Act (Revised Edition) of 2000.

National Meteorological Service and Fortis Belize partnering up

By Britney Gordon

The National Meteorological Service (NMS) and the Fortis Belize Limited (FBL) have joined forces to strengthen climate and energy resilience through mutual research and support.

The NMS and FBL signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU), agreeing to work collaboratively on data collection and research on December 7, 2022.

The effort will focus mainly on sharing rainfall and other climate data, as well as monthly inflow projections from the Macal River catchment area. This information is collected to help enhance the country's early warning system and performance at FBL dams.

The partnership will grant the NMS insight into the Macal River hydrology



(L-r) FBL President & CEO Kay Menzies and Minister Orlando Habet

and the climate surrounding the Maya Mountains, a first for the organization which will further support its mission to mitigate climate change challenges and protect life and property. On the other hand, FBL will gain access to the NMS' Flood Early Warning System.

The agreement also allows both parties to share water level, rainfall, temperature data, and projections for, among other things, potential flood events.

As a direct result of the MOU a new weather station will be installed at the Chalillo dam.

Speaking on the

signing of the MOU, the Minister of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management, Hon. Orlando Habet pledged his support, stating, "This Memorandum of Understanding represents a significant milestone

in the development of public and private sector partnerships. It formalizes and builds on the relationship that these two organizations have in supporting initiatives towards Belize's clean and renewable energy generation and production ambitions while strengthening the country's resilience to climate variability and climate change."

FBL is a leading provider of renewable energy in Belize. It generates hydroelectric power delivered to Belize Electricity Limited (BEL), adding as much as 40% renewable energy to the nation's electric grid through its 25-megawatt M o l l e j o n hydroelectric facility, the 7.3-megawatt C h a l i l l o hydroelectric facility, and the 19-megawatt Vaca hydroelectric facility, each located on the Macal River.

FBL President and CEO Kay Menzies expressed excitement to be partnering with the NMS, stating, "We see great value in partnering to improve data collection and research for Belize's climate resilience efforts."

Data is one of the world's most invaluable assets today since having the right information at your fingertips is the difference between making a choice that's 'good enough' versus making the best decision possible to have a positive and lasting impact. Reliable information that can inform analysts will help FBL and the NMS create more resilient plans for Belize's sustainable future. This is critical, especially as we strive to combat climate change and mitigate any susceptibility to energy shortages and natural disasters."

REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST CONSTRUCTION SERVICES FOR THE PLACENCIA AND INDEPENDENCE VILLAGE FIRE STATION BUILDINGS

Institution: BELIZE NATIONAL FIRE SERVICE

Country: BELIZE

Project: PLACENCIA AND INDEPENDENCE VILLAGE FIRE STATION BUILDINGS PROJECT

Project ID Nos.: NFS-2022/PL01 & NFS-2022/IND02

Deadline: Wednesday 28th December, 2022

The Government of Belize has committed funding to contract an experienced and qualified contractor **FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF a FIRE STATION BUILDING** to be located in Placencia and Independence Villages.

General requirements of the Bidders:

- 1) Bidder's Company must be incorporated in the country of Belize a minimum of five years;
- 2) Bidders must have experience in works of a similar size, scope and nature;
- 3) Bidders must present two references from projects recently completed in the last two years
- 4) Bidders must confirm access to minimum resources (technical, financial, human resources)
- 5) Bidders are required to present Certificates of Good standing from the Companies Registry, the Belize Tax Service and the Belize Social Security Board.

Interested contractors please note that above requirements are mandatory, and this information must be included within any final submitted bid. Note the deadlines below:

- a. The deadline for submission of **Expression of Interest is Wednesday, 28th December, 2022.**
- b. The deadline for the submission of **your final bid is January 25, 2023.**

Interested contractors may obtain bidding documents scope of works electronically at the email address below from Monday to Fridays starting **Monday December 12th 2022** between the hours of 9:00 am and 3:00 pm. Printing of documents is at the intended Bidder's expense.

Belize National Fire Service
Attn: BID DOCUMENTS
#3578 Sunrise Avenue, Belize
Tel: 501-223-1183
E-mail: seniorsec@fire.gov.bz



The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is searching for a highly qualified

Private Sector Development Consultant

The IDB Belize Country Office (CBL) is seeking the services of a consultant who will work under the guidance of the IDB Lab Specialist and the Chief of Operation in Belize, to perform activities related to the origination, client-relations, and monitoring of IDB Lab and Compete Caribbean operations in Belize.

The ideal candidate must hold a bachelor's degree in business administration, economics, finance, or similar discipline with a minimum of three (3) years relevant professional experience, some of which would preferably have been in the areas of project management, public administration, and strategic planning. Experience in administration of projects financed by multilateral development institutions or other external donors would be an asset.

Post of duty: The IDB Country Office in Belize City

Contract Info: Full Time Consultancy for 12 months with possibility of renewal for a maximum of 3 years.

For more information on the position's requirements and to apply

please visit our website at

[Job Description - Private Sector Development Consultant \(2200001073\) \(taleo.net\)](#)

Closing date for application is December 15th, 2022

If you have any challenge with the online application system, please contact us at hrsc@iadb.org

BHS students prep for model OAS meeting

Belize City, November 30th, 2022

The Organization of American States has organized a model OAS General Assembly for high schools for the past 41 years; as an educational exercise for the children of its member states to gain a better understanding of their hemisphere neighbors, and exercise in which the Belize High School students have participated for the past seven years.

Ten BHS students are participating in this the eighth, consecutive year of BHS being a part of the model OAS for high schools, which the OAS in Washington DC will host virtually from December 12-14. A delegation of three students will represent each of the 34 OAS member states, and the OAS Secretariat has assigned Argentina and Costa Rica as the countries for the BHS to represent. BHS students Olivia Quinto, Jade Mena and Alaine Perdomo will represent Argentina; while Georgiana Norman, Alessandra Avila and Aden Zabaneh will represent Costa Rica.

The chief advisor who is coordinating this year's model OAS is also a Belizean: Kendall Belisle, who works in the OAS Assistant Secretary General's office. Belize's Ambassador Nestor Mendez was elected to be the ninth OAS Assistant Secretary General on March 18, 2015, and took office on July 13, 2015. He assumed that office for a second term on July 17, 2020.

Now for the first time in the history of the model OAS for high schools, a Belizean student, Stephen Navarrete, will represent the model OAS President. Three others have been called upon to simulate model OAS authorities: Nathan Sharp as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs, Givanya Tesucum as a Committee Secretary,

and Wayne Alfaro as a Communications Officer. The students will learn a great deal from this role-playing as OAS diplomats and political officials, as they will have to research and learn all about the issues which are important to the member states they will represent. The OAS instituted this simulation of the OAS General Assembly to promote democratic values among the young people of the Americas, as students, faculty, and academic institutions familiarize themselves with the work of the OAS, and gain a better understanding of its member states.

During the three days of the model OAS meeting, the student delegates will work rigorously in the General Committee, the Committee on Juridical and Political Affairs, and the Committee on Hemispheric Security. The General Committee will address migration in the Americas, focusing on cooperation among countries of origin, transit, and destination to ensure the protection of the rights of migrants in the Americas.

They will also analyze best practices between member states to efficiently manage youth migration in the region. The second committee will consider public defenders and access to justice, identifying the challenges which public defenders in the Member States must overcome, and the States' duty to provide effective public defense as a guarantee of due process. The third committee will review Citizens' Security, to promote a multi-dimensional approach to improve citizen security at the state level, and to coordinate efforts among law enforcement, civil society and communities to reduce crime and violence.

BHS principal Jamie Usher and teacher Judy Carrillo will chaperone and mentor



BHS Student Stephen Navarrete

these student leaders, as they coordinate their schedules to research, write opening statements, prepare opinions for resolutions on current issues, debate complex topics, and negotiate and network with peers from various schools in different countries. The model OAS general assembly is an accurate simulation, in which the students will gain valuable experience of what it means to be a leader, to work with others and to think ahead, as they discuss topics that can have a real impact.



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Non Communicable Diseases are a growing threat in Belize

By William Ysaguirre

The Ministry of Health and Wellness has emphasized that proper diet and exercise are the key to controlling non-communicable diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, cancer and other diseases which have become a growing threat in Belize. The Ministry has geared up to fight these diseases by monitoring and controlling the risk factors with the help of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

Belizean health officials met with PAHO experts to develop a national surveillance plan to monitor and control these diseases, at a workshop sponsored by PAHO at the Best Western Biltmore Plaza Hotel on Monday and Tuesday, December 5-6. They hope to prevent premature deaths and respond to the people's health needs, by reducing health risks like unhealthy diet, tobacco and alcohol use.

The burden of premature death from these diseases represents an economic loss that can account for as much as 4 percent of Gross Domestic Product, which threatens to reverse the gains made by economic development. So investment in health care should not be seen as a cost, but rather as an economic investment to prevent loss of GDP. With more than half of Belizeans living in poverty, the ministry cannot afford to allow disease to worsen their situation, noted PAHO health systems advisor Dr Edwin Bolastig.

The right decisions of government policy must be based on good information; so the systematic collection of health information is key to proper planning and implementation of public health practice, Bolastig said. Belize's leadership in building up assessment and key sources of information, is fulfillment of the CARICOM Port of Spain declaration of 2007, and the United Nations has followed suit. The UN health leaders meeting recently approved a 2023 roadmap for controlling these diseases and their risk factors, setting nine voluntary targets and 25 indicators.

The Ministry has identified four key areas that need to be addressed, the Director of Public Health and Wellness Dr Melissa Diaz-Musa explained. These are non-communicable diseases, communicable diseases, the emergency medical response for ongoing health threats, and the development of human resources for health care. The key factors determining how quickly these goals can be achieved are sustainable financing and digitalization in these areas to speed up service.

Health workers will have to be trained and management guidelines need to be updated to strengthen and build up the national surveillance system to monitor the risk factors that cause these diseases, Diaz said. The ministry will also develop a strategy to prevent and reduce non-communicable diseases, such as mental illness and cancer. It cannot be over-emphasized that good nutrition is key to reducing obesity and its complications: diabetes, hypertension, kidney disease and heart disease, etc. The aim is to ensure patients experience better and improved medical care.

Monitoring is key to detect illness early so it can be managed better. But the COVID pandemic exacerbated the problem, as it complicated the risks in detecting and preventing these diseases. The pandemic also amplified more serious mental health problems, such as depression, stress, and post traumatic stress disorder.

The ministry's concern is urgent as COVID-19, heart disease, malignant neoplasm, diabetes and other chronic disease directly associated with diet were the leading causes of death in 2020, according to the statistics Diaz cited; assault and homicides ranked fifth. Belize's situation is but a fraction of the larger, global picture; where the World Health Organization reports that deaths from non-communicable diseases are on the rise,



*PAHO Health Systems Advisor
Dr. Edwin Bolastig*



*Director of Public Health and Wellness
Dr. Melissa Diaz*

accounting for 74 percent of all deaths around the world in 2019. The biggest killer is heart disease which caused 16 percent of all deaths. This means an estimated 15 million people between the ages of

30 years and 70 years died prematurely from NCDs in 2020. Non-communicable diseases account for 65 percent of all deaths in Belize, and Belizeans have a 16 percent chance of dying prematurely from these diseases.

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Latin America and the Caribbean likely to face food insecurity crisis

By Britney Gordon

According to a report from the UN, Latin America and the Caribbean are at risk of a food insecurity crisis due to the war in Ukraine and sequential international crises.

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the World Food Programme (WFP) collaborated on a joint policy entitled 'Towards sustainable food and nutrition security in

Latin America and the Caribbean in response to the global food crisis', in an effort to strengthen agricultural production and social protection systems.

The report, jointly published by the organizations, details the lasting effects that international crises have had on Latin America and the Caribbean's access to food and key inputs for regional agriculture; likening the effects to that of past crises such as the financial crisis of 2008, trade tensions between the United States and China,



REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Corporate Website Development

OVERVIEW

Belize Electricity Limited (BEL) is requesting for expression of interest from parties who would like to participate in the bidding process for the development of a corporate website for BEL. The information submitted will be used as part of the pre-qualification process.

PREQUALIFICATION

All interested parties must prequalify for the bidding process by filling out the Expression of Interest form which can be found at www.bel.com.bz/Tenders.aspx.

Following the assessment of submissions, a short-list of not less than three and not more than six applicants, subject to a pass mark of 70 points, will be provided with full Terms of Reference and invited to submit technical and financial proposals to undertake the assignment. BEL reserves the right to accept or reject late applications or to cancel this invitation partially or in its entirety. It will not be bound to assign any reason for not short-listing any applicant and will not defray any costs incurred by any applicant in the preparation and submission of Expressions of Interest.

SUBMISSION

The email containing the submission should include the name and address of the applicant and shall be clearly labeled "Expressions of Interest: BEL Corporate Website Development".

Submit the Expression of Interest form via email to bidsubmittal@bel.com.bz no later than **3:00 p.m. local time on Monday, December 19, 2022.**

the COVID-19 pandemic. These crises have all contributed to the fluctuation of the global economy in the past 15 years, translating into breakdowns in various primary and manufacturing production chains, whether due to an increase in trade barriers or to disruptions in the global system for producing and transporting goods, the report explains.

Additionally, international trade of crude oil, natural gas, cereals, fertilizers and metals have been directly affected by the Ukraine war. As a result, fluctuating energy and food prices have contributed to the downward revision for global growth in 2022. According to ECLAC's latest projections, It is forecast that the global economy will grow 3.1 percent in 2022, a 1.3 percent decrease from what was estimated prior to the war. While it is anticipated that the Latin America and Caribbean region

will expand by 3.2 percent this year, a sharp decline to 1.4 percent is projected in 2023.

José Manuel Salazar-Xirinachs, ECLAC's Executive Secretary, maintains that Latin America and the Caribbean fall victim to the production and commercialization problems and to the price increases stemming from the war in Ukraine, despite having a significant agricultural trade surplus. Higher international prices for food and inputs affect both exporting countries as well as net food importers.

"The region imports more than 80% of the fertilizers used in agriculture. A reduction in the yields and harvests of products that are key to food security, due to less fertilization, is seen compounding the harmful effects of food inflation on the most vulnerable population," Salazar-Xirinachs stated.

A risk to the accessibility of healthy food was also noted in the report,

as food insecurity poses a greater threat to lower-income households. In the region, the inflation affecting the poorest sectors is 1.4 percent higher than what corresponds to the wealthiest sector. It was observed that in the poorest sector, more than two-thirds of headline inflation corresponds to food, in direct contrast to the wealthiest, where food accounts for less than half of inflation.

Mario Lubetkin, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Latin America and the Caribbean, noted that "hunger and food insecurity increased in the region by 30% between 2019 and 2021."

The UN emphasizes that in order to adequately address the rising crisis, policies need to be revisited with an emphasis on reducing structural and fiscal problems by coordinating in various areas such as, macroeconomic, social and productive.

RF&G LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

Date: December 6, 2022

Evan Lino of # 74 Orange Street Belmopan City, Cayo District, Belize C.A. having made written declaration that Policy GB6128149 under RF&G Life Insurance Company Ltd has been lost and having made request to the Company for a duplicate of the Policy, notice is hereby given that unless objection is raised within one month of the date herein, the requested duplicate policy will be issued.

US news outlet suggest Saldivar could be extradited to the US to face criminal charges

By Michelle Sutherland

Even as John Saldivar awaits the outcome of the National Party Council’s meeting, to decide on his candidacy within the UDP a recent publication by a US news outlet has surfaced suggesting the possibility of him being extradited to the US to face criminal charges.

The article dated December 1st and written by Michele McPhee, for the Los Angeles Magazine, picked up the coverage of John Saldivar’s designation by the US State Department, saying, “Within days of Kingston’s testimony in Utah, Saldivar resigned from office and was getting ready to reignite his political career, a campaign that was upended in recent days when the State Department announced that he and his family were barred from entering the U.S. and could face additional sanctions—including criminal charges and extradition. That prompted Saldivar to hold a contentious press conference in Belize denying he was corrupt, calling the U.S. government’s actions “egregious” and “unjust.”

The article followed with a quote from Saldivar himself in which he stated that he does not have any difficulty facing any trial in Belize or in the United States. He went on to say that he has guarded his reputation and that incidents like the one with Lev Dermen, in which he claimed he was not involved in any acts of corruption, have only served to cast aspersions on his reputation.

The article, in its reference to Saldivar’s designation, called it a rare and unusual one. It went on to inform readers that Saldivar’s designation stems from a relationship that he has shared with Jacob Kingston, the mastermind behind a plan that bilked the U.S Treasury out of \$511 million in green energy tax credit that he then attempted to



Former UDP Minister John Saldivar

launder overseas in Turkey and Belize. According to the article, court testimonies had alleged that Saldivar had facilitated the purchase of a parcel of land and even obtained Belizean citizenship for Kingston and his partner Lev Dermen in exchange for monthly payments and \$50,000 cash donations to his political coffers.

The article suggested that Saldivar’s name was repeatedly referenced in the 2020 federal money laundering trial during which Kingston took the stand and testified against Dermen, while detailing the relationship he shared with Saldivar, whom he said treated them like royalty, for each of the five times that they traveled to Belize. That included a tour of the coast of Belize onboard a Belize Coast Guard vessel which was gifted to Belize by the US Coast Guard. It was during one of those visits in 2014 that the article said that Saldivar reportedly asked the duo for financial support for his political campaigns to help him stay in power. In return, the article said that Saldivar had offered to secure a parcel of land on which Kingston was to build a casino.

“He told us that he had three or four individuals as part of his party, and their intent to be reelected and the conversation led to cash or to money that was needed for reelection campaign... The arrangement was that they would receive money every month for their campaign,” which accumulated to the tune of \$25,000 a month testified Kingston. The article also revealed that in court it was revealed that Saldivar flew to Miami in the Spring of 2014 where he allegedly picked up a bag stuffed with \$50,000 in cash.

Both Dermen and Kingston remain in state custody in Utah awaiting sentencing while several other persons including two federal agents, an FBI Agent, a former Homeland Security Investigation Agent, and a police detective have all been sent to jail on several charges relating to the fraud scheme.

Access the full article here, <https://www.lamag.com/citythinkblog/state-dept-bans-belize-pol-tied-to-los-angeles-armenian-crime-boss/?fbclid=IwAR18zel-yPI4DQ8Pp8HpVaTejyPVUPDJWoTGtVnS1hX07OAF6wm3CRTcp6Q>

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Decades first December storm brewing in the Atlantic

By Britney Gordon

Less than a week into the closure of hurricane season, a low pressure system has formed in the Atlantic ocean with the potential to develop into a tropical storm, the first in nearly a decade.

In a forecast from the National Hurricane Center, the system is developed about 800 miles northeast of the northern Leeward Islands, producing "a large area of disorganized showers and thunderstorms."

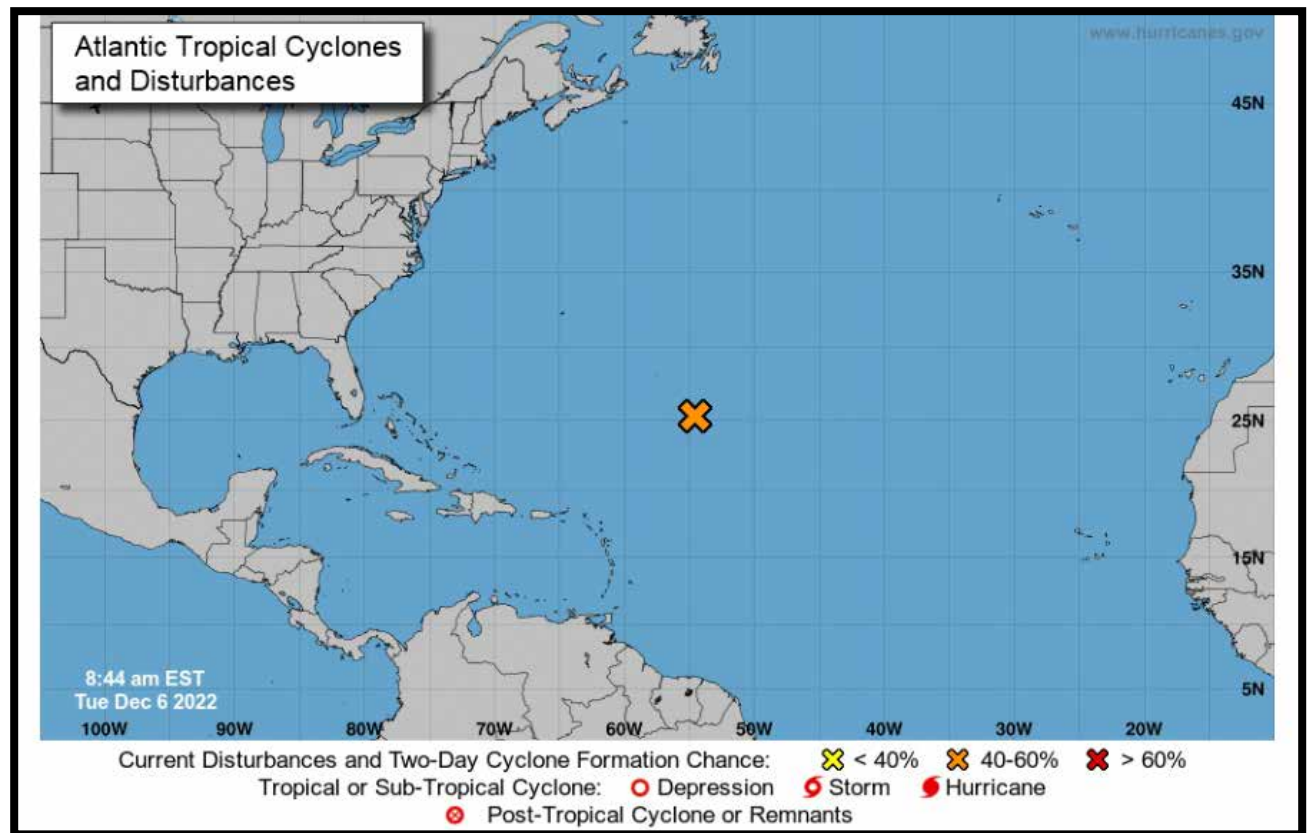
Despite the closure of the of the Atlantic hurricane season on November 30th, the system has a 50 percent chance of developing into a tropical storm. A December storm, is a rare event, the last of which

occurring in 2013, a near decade ago. This would be just the 11th December named storm on record since 1950. If a storm develops, it will be called Owen and it will be the 15th named storm for 2022.

A storm warning has already been issued by the Ocean Prediction Center, warning that some areas are seeing waves between 18 to 25 feet, while an even larger area is seeing waves between 9 and 18 feet.

"Regardless of development, this system is already producing a large area of gale force winds and storm force winds have developed this morning on the north side of the low," The NHC noted.

Scientist stated that typically, by



December, wind shear in the Atlantic Basin is too strong to allow for development and tropical waves are unlikely to develop. However, weakened wind forces can allow

the ocean to remain warm enough to allow for development, even in December.

Typically, ocean waters need to be at least 80 degrees to provide enough warm

and humid air to fuel development. However, recent studies have concluded that development can occur over somewhat cooler ocean water, particularly for

systems that aren't fully tropical. This area of low pressure is stationed over ocean water around 80 degrees, warmer than average temperatures for early December.

Heritage Bank and Hand in Hand build Jones family a home



Heritage Bank - Irene Duncan hands over house keys

By William Ysaguirre

Mrs. Angela Jones, her three daughters, son and infant grandson will have a warm Christmas, thanks to the staff of Heritage Bank Ltd and the Hand in Hand Ministries, who built them a new home on North Creek Road in Belize City.

The Jones family was living in rather difficult circumstances after their house collapsed when it fell off its stilts in mid-Junes of this year. Mrs Irene Duncan of Heritage Bank presented Mrs. Jones with the keys to her new home at a house warming ceremony on Tuesday afternoon, December 6.

Heritage Bank helped with the cost of the materials, valued at \$20,000, explained

Shannon Stuart of Hand in Hand ministries. Then some 30 to 40 volunteers from the Bank's staff and the National Fire Service came together and built the 20-by-16 foot wooden bungalow home in a space of three days, working under the supervision of construction contractors Beto Coc and Luis Cho.

The volunteers also built a concrete septic tank for the home, as the Jones' house lot is too far away from the nearest BWS sewer lines.

Mrs. Jones works in janitorial service at Heritage Bank, and General Manager Steve Duncan said it was the 17th home which the Bank's staff has built in partnership with Hand in Hand ministries.

United States Is World's Top Destination for Foreign Direct Investment

Jannick Damgaard, Carlos Sánchez-Muñoz

The United States recorded the largest increase of inward foreign direct investment of all economies in 2021. The latest release of the IMF's Coordinated Direct Investment Survey shows the US position increasing by \$506 billion, or 11.3 percent, last year.

For the 112 economies that reported data, inward FDI positions rose by an average of 7.1 percent in national currencies. In dollar terms, this global growth figure translates to only 2.3 percent, due to the recent strengthening of the greenback.

As the Chart of the Week shows, the United States is now the world's top destination for FDI, while China has moved up to the third position. It also shows how smaller economies take prominent positions among the global top 10. The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore, Ireland, and Switzerland all appear on this list even though none of these economies rank among the top 10 when it comes to gross domestic product.

The apparent disconnect between FDI data and the real economy comes down to the fact that these numbers are fundamentally a set of financial statistics. They show cross-border financial flows and positions between entities tied to each other by a direct or indirect ownership share of at least 10 percent. Such flows can end up as investments into productive activities within a country, like funds going into new factories and machinery, but they can also be purely financial investments with little to no link to the real economy.

For instance, many multinational companies set up special purpose entities in offshore financial centers where funds just flow through the economy, as an intermediate step towards their final destination. These entities are often established to obtain tax or regulatory benefits and can inflate FDI data considerably even though they have relatively little tangible impact on the host economy.

Research by Damgaard, Elkjaer, and Johannesen and Lane and Milesi-Ferretti shows how offshore financial centers play an outsized role in global FDI statistics, which increased even further in the years following the 2008 global financial crisis. The latest data from the CDIS shows that offshore financial centers still account for a disproportionately high share of global FDI. However, their share has gradually declined since 2017, while that of the largest economies such as the United States and China has increased.

The exact drivers of this development are hard to disentangle, but are likely linked to several policy initiatives. For example, the fall in the offshore financial centers' share of global FDI comes after the US Tax Cuts and Jobs Act took effect in 2018.

This legislation reduced incentives to keep profits in low-tax jurisdictions and led to a substantial US repatriation of funds from foreign subsidiaries. Additionally, sustained international efforts to reduce tax avoidance, like the OECD/G20 Base Erosion and Profit Shifting initiative, may have halted some flows to offshore financial centers.

This highlights the continued need for comprehensive and timely statistics to better understand these developments and to guide policymakers in their decision-making on international investment and tax policies. In addition to the CDIS, the IMF has launched an initiative to collect data on special purpose entities and released the first set of SPE statistics earlier this year. Country reporting of comprehensive FDI statistics was also an important part of the second phase of the G20 Data Gaps Initiative, with 19 out of 20 member economies now reporting data.

Even more policy-relevant data are in the pipeline. In close collaboration with its members and other international organizations, the IMF is updating the balance of payments manual to strengthen its relevance for surveillance and policy analysis.

New polyclinic inaugurated in Belmopan

By Michelle Sutherland

Residents of Belmopan and surrounding areas now have access to a new state-of-the-art

health facility, after the Belmopan Polyclinic officially opened its doors on Tuesday, December 6th, with an official ribbon-cutting

exercise to mark the special occasion.

The facility, valued at 1.4 million dollars, came via a partnership between the Government of Belize in conjunction with the Social Investment Fund which has been placed in charge of retrofitting the new facility with the necessary equipment. The new building was also reportedly built to withstand the effects of climate change, hence its placement inside the Western Regional Hospital compound.

“It has an area for outpatient services and a designated area for mental health, dental health, and general practice. It also houses a spacious waiting area, a special



The new clinic officially opened its doors.

area for maternal and healthcare, as well as observation rooms, triage, and a pharmacy. Our engineers at SIF, along with the technical staff of the Ministry of Health and Wellness, ensured that the design of this polyclinic is built of disaster resilient infrastructure so that it can withstand natural disasters like hurricanes,” said Nardia Garcia, Board Chair at SIF.

Minister of Health and Wellness Kevin Bernard who was also present at the opening ceremony indicated that the facility is expected to provide primary healthcare to residents, especially from the rural communities which will also help to reduce the present strain on the Western Regional Hospital. The only issue that the new facility is faced with according to the

minister is the lack of human resources such as doctors, nurses, and technicians in the various medical fields. To alleviate that situation the minister said that his ministry will be sending out vacancy notices in the hopes of attracting interested candidates

Area Representative for Belmopan Oscar Mira indicated that the new facility couldn't have come at a better time and will greatly assist and complement the Western Regional Hospital which was opened as far back as 1970. With Garden City's population expanding since then, Mira said that it was about time that a second healthcare facility was built.

Regional crackdown on gangs expected to have spillover effects on Belize



Commissioner of Police Chester Williams

By Michelle Sutherland

The regional crackdown of gangs in Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala, through the suspension of constitutional rights, has the Belize Police Department on high alert in the event that gang members might attempt to find refuge in Belize.

Commissioner of Police Chester Williams told the media on Monday that he has been apprised of the ongoing situation in El Salvador and Honduras via international news while counterparts in Guatemala have already contacted him to inform him that they are contemplating the same measures.

“Certainly, Belize is right next door to Guatemala, not too far from Honduras, next door through the maritime domain, and [El] Salvador is just an hour away, likewise. And so, as a nation, we must look at what is happening around us very seriously and make sure we put things in place that is not going to have these gang members that may want to flee those jurisdictions and see us as a safe haven,” said Williams.

While he wouldn't dive into the strategies that the department is rolling out, the commissioner said that locally the department is also monitoring its local gangs closely

and are working with them through a multi-sectorial approach in conjunction with the Leadership Intervention Unit. If it is that he sees that those efforts are not working, and the propensity for violence among the gangs increases any further, Williams indicated that the department will also have to resort to implementing its own draconian measures

“We are hoping that we don't have to get there, but as a department and a country, the government has a responsibility to ensure it safeguards the masses and we cannot allow ourselves to be held hostage or imprisoned by a few persons. So, it's something that we are monitoring very closely and the minute we see that things are not going the way they should, then whoever needs to be locked down will be locked down,” reiterated Williams.

Over the weekend the Honduran Government announced that it was going to enact a state of emergency in two of its main cities, suspending the constitutional rights of its citizens as the government moves to detain suspected gang members. On Monday, the Government of El Salvador also deployed over 10,000 troops into one of its most dangerous cities as part of President Nayib Bukele's latest gang crackdown.

VACANCY



NOTICE

Operations Manager

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

Reports to: Chief Executive Officer

Summary of Responsibilities: Lead the Operations Department to achieve the best possible level of service to our Customers, at the lowest possible cost, whilst ensuring zero harm. Inspire and motivate all Supervisors, Clerks and Operators and other Operations Staff to continuously improve safety standards and productivity, through the application of lean processes, complimented by the relevant application of technology. Lead change initiatives to achieve these macro-level goals. Establish and maintain excellent working relationships with all other heads of department, collaborating within the leadership team to ensure the optimal holistic contribution to the continued success of the company.

Job Responsibilities:

- Attract, develop, grow and retain the best talents and fill the leadership pipeline.
- Organize, balance and schedule workloads within the department.
- Prioritize, delegate, and set performance objective, and develop visual management systems.
- Follow-up on performance, provide quality feedback, and objectively appraise differentiated performance levels.
- Empower and inspire to achieve high levels of motivation and employee engagement.
- Ensure zero harm, improve safe working processes within the full Operational area of the facility.
- Provide timely reports for all accidents and disciplinary incidents.
- Understand Customer requirements and drive the department to achieve these on a consistent basis.
- Track and manage variable expenditure to avoid all cost waste and reduce costs to the bare minimum.
- Continuously lean, streamline, and improve processes.
- Leverage relevant technology to automate processes.
- Collaborate with the Technical department to ensure that the optimal quantity of equipment is available for deployment.
- Work closely with the Accounting department to ensure that all services are precisely and expeditiously billed to the Customers.
- Coordinate just-in-time berthing of all vessels with the Marine department.
- Maintain high levels of data quality for Operational information and reports provided to other functions.
- Represent the company towards Unions, Customers, Regulators and Authorities.
- Provide inputs into budgetary processes.
- Take ownership in ambiguous situations.

Job Qualifications/Requirement:

- Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Supply Chain Management, Port Management or other related field (Master's degree would be an asset)
- 3-5 years' exemplary leadership experience of diverse teams
- Minimum 3-5 years' experience in supervising or managing logistics operations or other similar fields

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

- Emotional intelligence
- Innovative and creative
- Complex problem-solving
- Critical and analytical thinking
- High cognitive ability
- Technology cognizance
- Persistence, resilience, stress tolerance, flexibility and adaptability
- Assertive and decisive
- Visionary and inspiring
- Coaching and mentoring
- High integrity

Compensation Package: Will be commensurate (in accordance with the Company's Salary Structure).

To apply: Provide updated resume, cover letter (addressed to Human Resource Manager), copy of valid social security card, valid police report, name and phone number of two (2) previous employers.

Email to:

jobapplications@portofbelize.com

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday, December 09, 2022.



REQUEST FOR BIDS

BELIZE

MINISTRY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT

Contract Title: Supply and deliver one water bowser for Ministry of Sustainable, Development and Disaster Risk Management

Reference No:

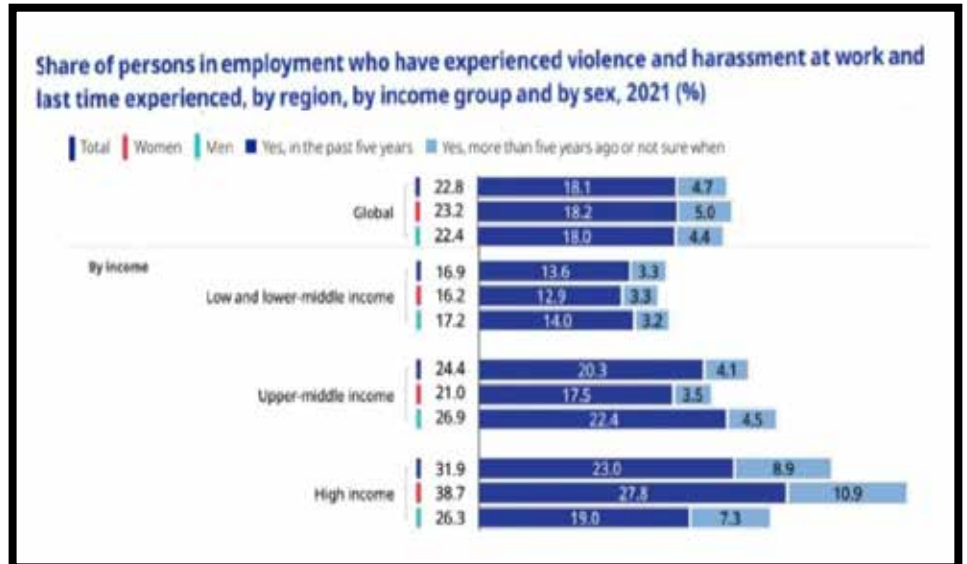
- The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) are collaborating with the European Union to build climate change resilience through the “**Building Climate Change Resilience and Social Integration of Displaced People in Settlements of Western Belize**” project.
- The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management acting on behalf of the Government of Belize intends to equip settlements surrounded by pine savannahs and threatened by fires with one fire bowser and invites sealed quotations from eligible suppliers for the following item:

No.	Description of Goods	Quantity	Final Destination
1	Water Bowser Truck General: Year: 2016 and newer Condition: New or Certified pre-owned Mileage: Below 150,000 miles G-2500-gallon epoxy coated tank 2 Spray heads in front, side spray and 2 spray heads in rear 1 1/2 " Cox hose reel with 50 ft of hose Backup camera Water level gauge with monitors installed in cab 11r 22.5's sized tires with great tread Ice cold A/C Serviced, washed, and detailed Engine Fuel Type: Diesel Powertrain T ransmission: Manual 6 speed Drive Side: Left Hand Drive Category Specific Water Type: Non-Potable Tank Composition: Steel Fill Type: top fill / PTO pump Attachments Spray System: Yes Front Spray: Yes Side Spray: Yes Rear Spray: Yes Hose Reel: Yes Hose Reel Type: Manual Backup Camera: Yes PTO Pump @225 gallon per Minute	1	Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management

- The Request for Bids is in accordance with Open Tendering Procedure as specified in the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, Chapter 15 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2011, and is open to all eligible potential suppliers.
- Interested potential suppliers may obtain further information from the International Organization for Migration, email creyna@iom.int or snovelo@iom.int.
- The Bid document will be sealed with three hard copies to the IOM office and an electronic copy by interested, eligible suppliers upon submission to the email address provided above and below.
- Bids are to be accompanied by **Letters of Good Standing** from the **Belize Tax Service, Belize Companies Registry, and the Belize Social Security Board.**
- This is to ensure you are getting bids from reputable bidders.
- Quotations must be delivered or emailed to the address below on or before **4:00 pm on Monday January 9rd, 2023**. Late quotations will be rejected. Quotations will be opened in the presence in of the selection committee on **Monday, January 16th, 2023 at 2:30 pm.**
- The address referred to above is:**

**376 Bay Street, Suite 4 Buttonwood Bay
Belize City,
Belize,
Phone #223-9500**

1 in 5 people experience violence at work



By Britney Gordon

A joint analysis conducted by the UN International Labour Organization (ILO), Lloyd's Register Foundation (LRF) and Gallup reveals that almost 23 percent of employees have experienced either physical, psychological or sexual harassment in the workplace.

The survey titled “Experiences of Violence and Harassment at Work: A global first survey,” aims to provide a better understanding and awareness of an issue rooted in complex economic, social and cultural factors. According to the data, young people, migrant workers, and salaried women and men have been the most exposed to violence.

The research highlighted the difficulty of measuring workplace harassment cases. According to the survey, only half of victims worldwide had disclosed their experiences to another person. Typically, this disclosure only occurs after the victim has suffered repeated incidents. Among harassment victims, 60.7 percent of women were likely to share their experiences compared to the 50.1 percent of men.

Globally, disaggregation by sex shows that in the Americas, men

victims were 17.9 percent more likely than women victims to have experienced three or more episodes of physical violence and harassment in their working lives. The survey also asked respondents about their experience with psychological violence and harassment at work, such as insults, threats, bullying or intimidation. It revealed that 583 million people have experienced this behaviour at work and approximately 463 million of those people, regardless of sex, experienced it within the past five years. Overall, women registered higher prevalence than men, both in their working life and in the past five years.

In addition to physical and psychological violence, respondents were asked about their experiences with sexual violence and harassment at work, such as unwanted sexual touching, comments, pictures, emails or sexual request. Approximately 205 million people in employment had experienced sexual violence and harassment in their working life. Young women were twice as likely as young men to have faced sexual violence and harassment. Overall, 8.2 percent of women in employment

had experienced sexual violence and harassment over the course of their working life, compared to 5.0 percent of men. This is by far the largest gender difference in experience of violence and harassment at work among the three forms of violence and harassment.

The organizations stated that gathering robust data on this highly sensitive issue is an essential aspect of ending it. “For too long, companies and organizations have been unaware or unwilling to tackle violence and harassment in the workplace,” said Andrew Rzepa, a Partner at Gallup. “This dataset provides a baseline that we can all use to track much-needed progress on this vital safety issue.”

“Psychological violence and harassment is the most prevalent across countries, and women are particularly exposed to sexual violence and harassment. The report tells us about the enormity of the task ahead to end violence and harassment in the world of work. I hope it will expedite action on the ground and towards the ratification and implementation of ILO Convention 190,” said Manuela Tomei, ILO Assistant Director-General for Governance, Rights and Dialogue.

RF&G LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LTD.

Date: December 2, 2022

Dianelie Blanco of #4th Street L/F Belizee City, Belize District, Belize C.A. having made written declaration that Policy LTAN001031 under RF&G Life Insurance Company Ltd has been lost and having made request to the Company for a duplicate of the Policy, notice is hereby given that unless objection is raised within one month of the date herein, the requested duplicate policy will be issued.

CEO of Economic Development expecting inflation to decrease shortly

By Michelle Sutherland

CEO of the Ministry of Economic Development Dr. Osmond Martinez has told The Reporter that he is expecting the current inflation rate in Belize to start decreasing in the next six months.

“With certain things in international geopolitics, I believe that around June or July of [next] year we will start to see a sort of decline in terms of inflation. Hopefully, those movements in the international and global playing fields can help us to reduce and get inflation to start decreasing,” Martinez opined. “My only concern is that I am not

sure if we will go back to the original prices.”

To better gauge the effects of inflation on the public, Martinez revealed that several studies have been conducted on various sectors such as the productive sector, service sector, and consumers. Those results have revealed that Belize needs to become more productive for something like inflation not to have such widespread effects again.

“There is a need for us to be able to have some sort of control over what we consume. Presently, 53% of what we consume is imported,” said

Martinez.

He also pointed out that 53% is also representative of how much inflation is being imported into the country since anything that is bought on the international market must be bought at whatever price it is available in the US or from wherever else the goods are sourced. In fact, according to the CEO, inflation in Belize could have been worse if the government had not put in place public policies such as subsidies for the various sectors as well as removing all taxes on fuel.

“We need to be more productive, for example, in several



CEO of the Ministry of Economic Development
Dr. Osmond Martinez

sectors that have multidimensional impacts. One of those is energy. We are importing energy but if we would be able to balance the production of energy to our demand. If we would be able to supply the demand for energy that we have in Belize then that in itself would

be able to move the country into a more sustainable path in terms of productivity because now renewable energy can now be linked to transportation, production, the agro-productive sectors, and the service sector, so energy is key in that aspect,” he commented.

When asked about his outlook on the country’s economic growth in the face of inflation, Martinez said that the economy has been growing at an excellent pace. In fact, he said that in the second quarter of this year it was estimated to be at 12% and is expected to exceed that figure for the third quarter. In relation to foreign

direct investment, Martinez classified it as currently being the highest in the history of Belize. He explained that the majority of that is being pumped into the construction sector.

Some of the limitations in terms of that, however, is that the private sector has been reporting a shortage in the labor force, especially skilled labor. That shortage is now spilling over into the public sector. The positive side to that, according to Martinez, is that there is now an increase in employment across the country.

“Preliminary results from SIB shows that unemployment will be at its lowest for this period and practically unemployment is being done in two phases, one is in March and the other in September. March is usually lower than in September but because of the increase in economic opportunity for jobs, our employment rate is even lower than initially forecasted,” ended Martinez.

John Saldivar schedule to appeal his termination to the NPC



UDP Leader Moses “Shyne” Barrow

By Michelle Sutherland

The National Party Council (NPC), the highest decision-making body of the United Democratic Party (UDP), is reportedly scheduled to meet at the end of this week to have a final say on John Saldivar’s future in the UDP.

Saldivar indicated that he would refer the matter of his continued candidacy for the Belmopan Constituency to the NPC, following what he is referring to as a narrow Special Committee vote against his candidacy. The final decision, according to Saldivar, lies with the NPC, and, therefore, he will await that outcome.

Prior to Saldivar’s announcement, UDP Leader Moses “Shyne” Barrow had said that while it is within Saldivar’s right to appeal the decision, he is of the view that Saldivar should honor the committee’s decision.

“It is my position

as the duly elected leader of the UDP that John Saldivar should not run for the UDP and should withdraw from politics in the position as an area representative or a standard bearer and deal with all of the matters that have befallen him. I think a retirement from politics at this time is a wise decision,” Barrow explained.

In fact, Barrow made it clear that as a member of the NPC, he will vote that the committee’s decision stands and that he will do everything in his power to encourage his colleagues to respect that decision for the best interest of their party. Furthermore, Barrow said that while he had asked and even pleaded with Saldivar to step down from his post and go quietly, he had outrightly rejected to do so, and now while he thanks Saldivar for all his contribution to the UDP, it is his firm belief that the committee’s decision signals the end of Saldivar’s political

career. Barrow also shared that Saldivar’s designation by the US State Department and now an ongoing criminal investigation against him is simply too much for the party at this point.

In his comments, Barrow also underscored that the committee’s decision against Saldivar is a clear example to the public that the party does not tolerate corruption among its members, and has zero tolerance for any of its members to repeatedly engage in personal misconduct. While Barrow also confirmed that the US State Department did not respond to the party’s request for evidence against Saldivar, he noted that even in the absence of legal or technical evidence, there is still a mountain of circumstantial evidence of significant corruption by Saldivar.

Last Friday, the Special Committee met in an effort to decide on Saldivar’s candidacy in the aftermath of the designation against him by the US State Department. The committee voted that Saldivar’s candidacy should be disallowed with immediate effect and that he relinquish his positions as interim Caretaker for Belmopan and Western Regional Leader

A release from Barrow’s desk as party leader indicated that the committee also considered the barrage of allegations of corruption that had haunted Mr. Saldivar’s political career.

Weh Wi Ga Fi Seh

Sat. Disemba 10: Kriol
Jenral Meetn da Birdz
Ailan (Bird's Isle)

Satideh, Disemba 10: Kriol Meetn!

Yu da Kriol er yu sopoat Kriol langwij ahn kolcha? Yu waahn help spred di werd bowt wi Kriol hischri? Yu waahn put een yu too sens bowt how fi help Kriol Bileezhan moov faawad?

Satideh, Disemba 10, 2022:

Kriol Jenral Meetn

da Birdz Ailan (Bird's Isle) eena Yaabra, Bileez Siti.

Mek wi meet op da Birdz Ailan, Bileez Siti, fahn 10 a.m., fi di Kriol meetn fi chooz di Nashanal Kriol Kongsl leedaz fi di neks 2 yaaz.

Rait afta dat, **KRIOL BRAM:**

- * Sambai jromaz! Pahn tap ... Baba Emmeth
- * Bredda David & di Tribal Vibes Band
- * BIRD's Isle food & jrinks on sale
- * Kriol snaks pahn sayl * Faiyahaat
- * Kriol langwij gaymz!
- * Kriol “Kuchriments” * Krismos speshalz!

Jain di Kriol Kongsl tudeh tudeh er da di Meetn:
<https://forms.gle/yJnwTSzJjXfUC7Wf6>

Kohn injai yusef ahn lov op Bileez ahn wi Kriol kolchal

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

Report shows increase in trade restrictions amidst economic uncertainty, multiple crises

By the World Trade Organization

The WTO Director-General's annual overview of developments in the international trading environment shows that trade restrictions are increasing in a context of economic uncertainty exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the food security crisis. According to the latest WTO Trade Monitoring Report presented on 6 December at a meeting of the Trade Policy Review Body, WTO members are introducing restrictions at an increased pace, particularly on food, feed and fertilizers. The stockpile of import

restrictions in force also continues to grow. WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala called on WTO members to refrain from adopting new trade-restrictive measures, particularly export restrictions, that can further contribute to a worsening of the global economic outlook and urged them to cooperate to keep markets open and predictable in order to allow goods to move around the world to where they are needed. "Members have increasingly implemented new trade restrictions, in particular on the export side, first in the context of the pandemic and more recently in the

context of the war in Ukraine and the food security crisis. Although some of these export restrictions have been lifted, many others persist," she said. "Out of the 78 export restrictive measures on food, feed, and fertilizers introduced since the start of the war in late February, 57 are still in place, covering roughly USD 56.6 billion of trade. These numbers have increased since mid-October, which should be a cause for concern." "As I told G20 Leaders at their summit in Indonesia a few weeks ago, lifting those export restrictions is fundamental to reduce price spikes and volatility and to

allow goods to flow to where they are urgently needed," she added. Her full remarks are here. During the review period for the report, from mid-October 2021 to mid-October 2022, WTO members introduced more trade-facilitating (376) than trade-restrictive (214) measures on goods (unrelated to the pandemic), with the average number of trade-facilitating measures per month at its highest since 2012. Most of the facilitation happened on the import side while most of the restrictions were on the export side. For the first time since the beginning of the monitoring exercise in 2009, the number of export restrictions outpaced that of import restrictions.

The trade coverage of the trade-facilitating measures was estimated at USD 1,160.5 billion, and that of the trade-restrictive measures at USD 278.0 billion. The stockpile of import restrictions in force also continued to grow. By mid-October 2022, over 9% of global imports continue to be affected by import restrictions implemented since 2009 and which are still in force.

Initiations of trade remedy investigations declined sharply during

the review period (10.9 initiations per month, the lowest since 2012) after reaching its highest peak in 2020 (36.1 initiations per month). These actions remain an important trade policy tool for many members, accounting for 37.4% of all non-COVID-19-related trade measures on goods recorded. Anti-dumping continues to be the most frequent trade remedy action in terms of initiations and terminations.

The implementation of new COVID-19-related trade measures decelerated over the past 12 months, with 45 such measures recorded on goods and four on services. Additional information communicated by WTO members mainly consisted of termination of existing measures or amendments of others. The number of new COVID-19-related support measures by WTO members and observers to mitigate the social and economic impacts of the pandemic fell sharply over the review period.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, 443 COVID-19-related trade and trade-related measures in the area of goods have been introduced. Most were trade-facilitating (246 or 56%), while the rest were trade-restrictive

(197 or 44%). During the review period, members continued to phase out the pandemic-related measures, and in particular the restrictive ones.

According to information received by the WTO Secretariat, as of mid-October 2022, 79.2% of the COVID-19-related trade restrictions have been repealed, leaving 27 export restrictions and 14 import restrictions in place. Although the number of the pandemic-related trade restrictions still in place has decreased, their trade coverage remains important at USD 134.6 billion.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, a consistent feature of the trade and trade-related measures taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis has been the frequent changes, adjustments and gradual roll-back of such measures to reflect the evolving situation.

The updated lists of measures implemented in the context of the current pandemic are available on the COVID-19 page of the WTO website and cover the areas of goods, services and intellectual property as well as measures communicated by members on general economic support.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

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

Position Name: Administrative Management Assistant (International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs)
Vacancy number: Belmopan-2022-22
Closing date: December 23rd, 2022

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

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

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

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

S U D O K U

Medium Puzzle

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

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

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



Minimum Wage and a Balanced-and-Evidenced-based Approach

Contributed by the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry

“Many countries have discovered that a gap exists between the legitimate needs of workers and their families and what the economy is capable of paying in terms of minimum wages. It will not be possible to eliminate this gap in a single minimum wage adjustment, at least not without adverse economic effects. This suggests that there should be a medium- to long-term target for this policy – that is, closing this gap in successive, gradual adjustments”—International Labour Organization (ILO)’s Minimum Wage Policy Guide (2016).

“What is the Belize private sector’s position on the minimum wage uprate?” In short, the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI) has been on record for some time now saying that it actually supports an increase in the legislated minimum hourly rate. However, the distinction between our position and that of the government emerges as it pertains to the size and timing of the increase. For the BCCI’s part, we have adopted the International Labour Organization’s (ILO)’s prescription for a Balanced-and-Evidenced-based Approach. And based on that approach, we have consistently advised a gradual, phased-in set of adjustments to reach the policy target of \$5.00 an hour.

So, before proceeding, we wish to be clear. The BCCI’s position is not to oppose the eventual arrival at a \$5.00 an hour minimum wage. The BCCI’s position is that the journey to \$5.00— which represents a significant 52% increase from \$3.30—should be gradually implemented over a three-year period. This would give employers sufficient time to make the requisite adjustments and hopefully stave off any of the potentially adverse effects of increasing the minimum wage too fast and too soon.

Speaking of too fast and too soon, as articulated in the opening quote, the ILO—a United Nations agency with a specific, tripartite mandate—notes that it is not possible to bridge the gap between workers’ needs and the economy’s ability to pay “in a single minimum wage adjustment, at least not without adverse economic effects.” Instead, the organization advises “that there should be a medium- to long-term target for this policy ... closing this gap in successive, gradual adjustments.”

The ILO’s rationale for proposing such an approach is governed by the wish to have economies avoid negative spill-over effects that are more likely on account of acute uprates that do not consider both sides of the labour

market.

Needs of Workers

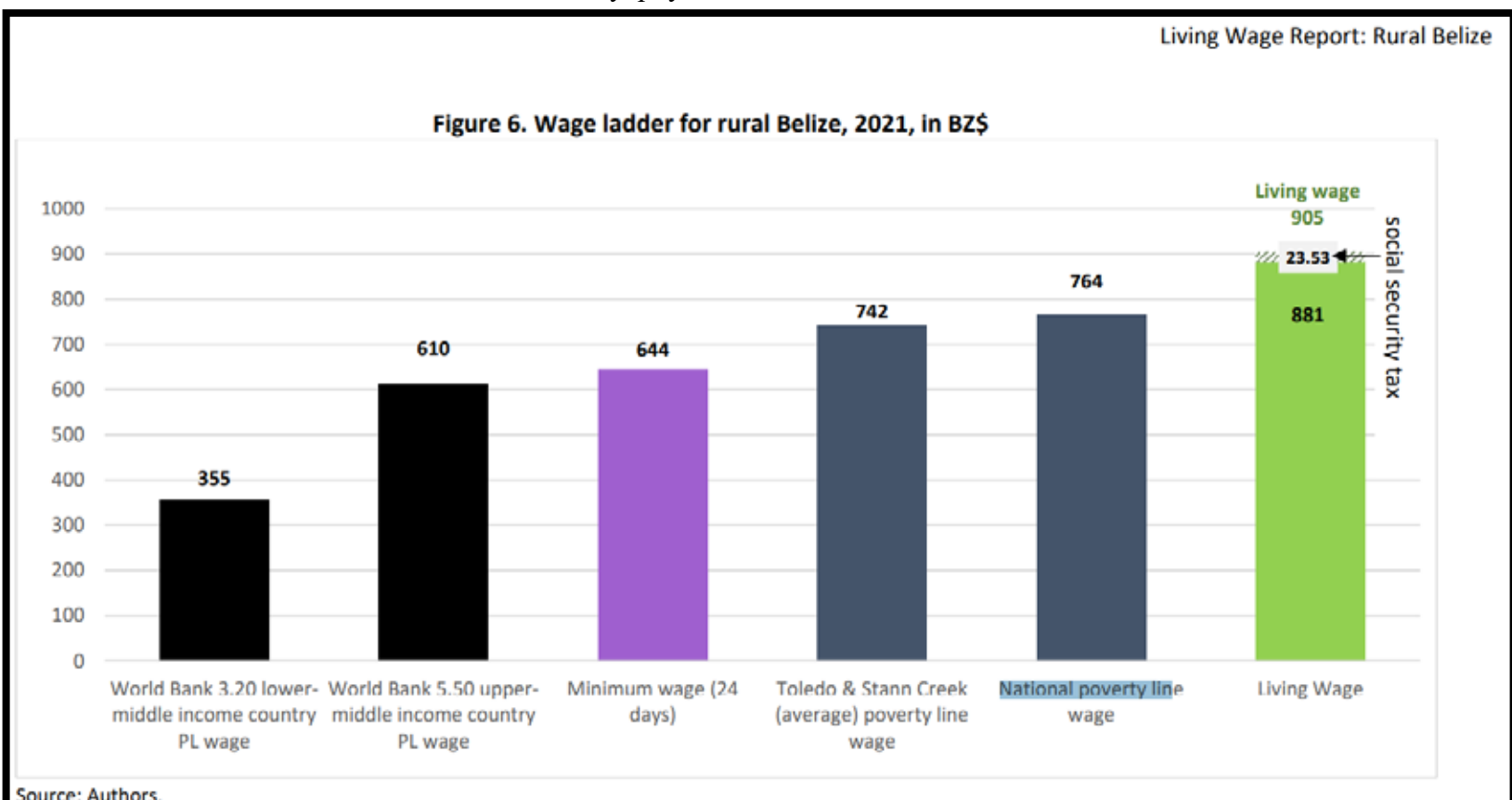
But before digging deeper into those “adverse effects” that the ILO cautions about, there is prudence in discussing the needs of workers. There are multiple ways we could approach this aspect, but if we look at Voorend, Anker and Anker (2021)’s Living Wage Report for Rural Belize, they estimated a monthly “living wage” of \$905 per month, a figure that translate to about \$4.64 per hour.

More precisely, as the Voorend, Anker and Anker (2021) observed: “The net living wage estimate (i.e. take-home pay required) for rural Belize for May 2021 is BZ\$ 881 (US\$ 437) per month. When mandatory payroll deductions

The aforementioned figure from Voorend, Anker and Anker (2021) and that from the inflation-adjusted VPL are more aligned and reflective of calculations for the “Living Wage,” which in many countries is notably larger than the legislated minimum wage.

For this reason, and based on available data from Voorend, Anker and Anker (2021) as well as the VPL-based estimates, the \$5.00 proposal by Government is actually best defined as a “Living Wage” as opposed to a minimum-wage.

More precisely, government’s target is eight percent higher than the \$4.64 per hour that Belize’s Living Wage report informs. And given that “Living Wages” are generally voluntary, this higher figure (i.e. GOB’s \$5.00)



for the public social security system (SSB) are added (BZ\$ 23.53), the gross living wage is BZ\$ 905 (US\$ 449).”

Interestingly, the trio’s findings are within the same range for the vulnerability-to-poverty line (VPL), once adjusted for inflation. Depending on the time frame (i.e. Dec 2021 or up to August 2022) used, the inflation-adjusted VPL falls between \$4.50 and \$4.75 per hour.

Difference between Minimum Wage and Living Wage

Now, we must be clear here: There is a difference between a “Minimum Wage” and a “Living Wage.” As explained by one key source, “A minimum wage is mandatory, [and] determined through legislation. It should meet an individual’s basic requirement but may still imply that a worker relies on government subsidies for additional income.”

In terms of the Living Wage, the same source states: “A Living Wage is not obligatory, but paid voluntarily. ...Paying workers a living wage might motivate them to stay with the company, thus reducing recruitment and training costs. It makes for healthier employees, thus reducing the loss of working hours due to sickness. Thus, the concept of a Living Wage takes the needs of both businesses and workers into consideration.”

should be voluntary, at least for the next three years. Employers than can afford the “Living Wage” are encouraged to do so, but there is also the reality that there are enterprises that are unable to sustain such a wide increase in a single adjustment.

But! What about the Minimum Wage?

Now, the immediately preceding statement ought NOT to be taken that the BCCI is saying that the actual minimum wage should remain at \$3.30. That is not, and has never been our position. On the contrary, the BCCI’s secretariat had gone as far as to produce a minimum-wage adjustment formula that takes into account—as its base—the General Poverty Line (GPL).

The GPL—as reported by the Statistical Institute of Belize (SIB) as \$7961 (or about \$3.40 an hour) based on 2018 data—would be closer to \$9,000 today. Voorend, Anker and Anker (2021), for their part, placed the inflation adjusted GPL at approximately \$9,170, a figure that converts to an hourly rate of \$3.92 per hour.

Furthermore, it is possible to demonstrate that between 2012 and today, the cumulative rate inflation has increased by roughly 16 percent. Therefore, the \$3.30 that was established in

Cont’d on pg 15



Minimum Wage and a Balanced-and-Evidenced-based Approach

Cont'd from pg 14

2012—and was not increased in accordance with inflation of the last ten years—legitimately should have increased to at least \$3.80 per hour.

Consequently, in our view, an initial 20 percent (instead of a 52%) hike in the minimum wage in the first instance is more justifiable and consistent with the Balanced-and-Evidenced-Based approach. A year later, the government could advance the minimum wage by another 12.5%, and in 2025 make the final adjustment to the desired \$5.00.

The Benchmarks and Compromise

Okay, so let's recap a few things. First, the BCCI advocates the application of the ILO's Balanced-and-Evidenced-Based Approach when it comes to the minimum wage uprates. Second, with the ILO's recommended approach in mind, we hold the view that there is more sound reasoning for a first-instance jump by 20% as opposed to the current administration's manifesto promise of 52% (i.e. \$3.30 to \$5.00, practically overnight). Third, there is a distinction between a "minimum wage" and a "living wage," with the latter—which is usually used voluntarily by employers—having already been estimated to be between \$4.60 and \$4.75.

Now, we just reiterated the point that the BCCI can find logic in supporting a first-instance approximately 20% increase in the minimum wage (essentially bringing it closer to \$4.00), and we stand by that for several reasons. First of all, it ensures that minimum-wage earners are above the General Poverty Line. Next, that mark is above where it would have stood had \$3.30 been adjusted for inflation. And while we haven't, in this article, elaborated on the minimum-wage adjustment formula that we have proposed, it is suffice to say that the aforementioned formula (which takes into account the GPL, economic growth, inflation, and levels of productivity) also supports the 20% first-instance increase.

At the same time, however, it must be appreciated that even that 20%—which we support—is notably above the conventional increases. A look at the nominal increases in the legislated minimum among OECD countries, for example, would inform that the average, annual change is approximately six percent (see stats.oecd.org).

One would observe (again in nominal terms) a significant 112% jump in Turkiye's (formerly Turkey) minimum wage, but that is explained by the current struggling monetary conditions in the country. Apart from experiencing inflation of more than 80%, Turkiye's currency has depreciated significantly, thereby, leading to a real-wage change of only 1.6%. Even with Turkiye's outlier-like data being included, the average is still six percent (6%) or less.

When that average (6%) is considered, one would have to appreciate that a 52% one-off increase is almost nine times that international benchmark. Even our acceptance of the 20% in the first instance is more than three times that average. Both magnitudes could be accused of violating the Balanced-and-Evidenced-Based approach. However, given the macroeconomic and political context within which this decision

is to be made, compromises to known best practices have become somewhat necessary.

Potential Adverse Effects

Finally, there is a reason why the ILO advises the Balanced-and-Evidenced-Based approach. Fundamentally, while the minimum-wage literature is a mixed bag, it is possible that too sharp increases can trigger those "adverse economic effects" that the ILO referenced in its policy guide.

For example, in a 2019 study by the Institute of Labour Economics (IZA) (Laporsek et. al, 2019), one would find the following concluding words:

"The large minimum wage increase triggered substitution away from minimum wage workers and lowered the likelihood that low-skill workers would be hired. We find evidence that part of the substitution is due to a shift in relative demand toward more super-minimum workers as the minimum wage continued to rise relative to average wages. ... The large minimum wage increase may have altered firms' investment decisions toward greater use of automation or other capital-intensive production methods. Firms may also have responded to the minimum wage hike by cutting back on output or by ceasing production."

The study, which looked an approximately 30% hike in Slovenia's minimum wage over a four-year period (which it considers a large increase, by the way) also was found to have disemployment effects for low-skilled workers.

"It shows that Slovenia's March 2010 increase of the minimum wage, while increasing earnings of workers that retained employment after the wage increase, reduced employment of the low-skilled workers more than proportionally," the authors wrote, adding, "As a result, the policy failed to redistribute earnings to low-skill workers as a whole."

An intriguing takeaway is found in the following statement: "In real terms, the minimum wage rose by almost one-third and the ratio of the minimum wage to the average wage rose from 41.2% to 51.5% over 4 years." That's a 10.3 percentage point increase spread across four years, and that was deemed "large." We really should let that sink in.

In real terms, Belize's current minimum wage is about 55% of our average earning (i.e \$1168 per month according to the SIB). Again, in real terms, the sudden jump to \$5.00 would increase this ratio to 83%, which represent a 28 percentage-point increase.

The BCCI's middle-ground position of a relatively smaller increase by 20% would suggest a minimum wage that is about 67% of the average income. This, of course, is a 12 percentage point increase, which is still larger than Slovenia's 10 percentage-point (over four years), but, again, economic and political conditions demand some deviations from international best practice, while still staying as close as possible to the tenets of the Balanced-and-Evidenced-based approach.

There can be adverse effects in Belize. The fact is that we have two groups of employers: Those who say that they may have to consider laying off workers or passing on the increased costs to end consumers, or both. The other

group is made of up of those who have already been paying above the minimum wage. It is possible, however, that some in the latter group are yet to appreciate the rippling effect that too sharp of a change could have even on non-minimum-wage employees' payroll demands and costs.

Subsidies for Additional Income

Of course, someone may make the point that a phased-in approach leaves persons below the living-wage threshold. That is a sound argument, but there is value, at this point, to reiterate a quote used earlier:

"A minimum wage is mandatory, [and] determined through legislation. It should meet an individual's basic requirement but may still imply that a work relies on government subsidies for additional income."

The fact is that the minimum wage was never designed to work in isolation from other social-protection programs and policies. The gap between the "Living Wage" and the phased-in "Minimum Wage" should be filled by the taxpayer-funded government's social assistance, social insurance, social care, and active labour market intervention policies.

While the discourse is fixed on the legislated minimum, it is worth reminding that all citizens (private sector and non-private sector) all contribute to the public purse with an understanding that the government will, inter alia, assist in redistributive policies. What, then, is the status for Belize's social protection programs? How robust is its programs to assist the vulnerable households and individuals? Is the administration of any subsidy program adequate? Is the level of spending in such programs sufficient? These matters and more must be looked at carefully.

In the End

Let us end how we started. At no point did the BCCI ever say it is opposed to a minimum-wage adjustment. However, the call for a responsible, phased-in, evidenced-based approach is governed by empirical data and policy guidance from the likes of the ILO.

As stated earlier, there is a distinct difference between a "Living Wage" and a "Minimum Wage," and it is important that in trying to reach the former, we do not allow the latter to create those "adverse economic effects" that even the ILO warns about.

The average increases among OECD countries approximates about six percent, because most jurisdictions heed the advice of the International Labour Organization that says that the needs of the workers and the ability of the economy to pay must be taken into account. We encourage, therefore, all stakeholders to investigate and learn more about the specifics of the Balanced-and-Evidenced-Based Approach as we move forward on this important policy matter.

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.



Brittney Griner is released from Russian detention

The US and Russia have exchanged jailed US basketball star Brittney Griner for notorious arms dealer Viktor Bout, held in an American prison for 12 years.

President Joe Biden said Griner was safe and on a plane home from the United Arab Emirates.

Griner was arrested at a Moscow airport in February for possessing cannabis oil and last month sent to a penal colony.

The Biden administration proposed a

prisoner exchange last July, aware Moscow had long sought Bout's release.

Russia's foreign ministry confirmed the swap and said it had taken place at Abu Dhabi airport.

Speaking in the Oval Office, Griner's wife Cherelle praised the efforts of the Biden administration in securing her release: "I'm just standing here overwhelmed with emotions."

As part of the prisoner exchange, President Biden signed the

order for Bout's release, commuting his 25-year jail term.



Viktor Bout sold arms to warlords and rogue governments,

becoming one of the world's most wanted men.



Dubbed the "merchant of death" for gun-running in the years after the fall of

the Soviet Union, the Russian's exploits inspired the 2005 Hollywood film *Lord of War*, which was loosely based on his life.

His secretive career was brought to an end by an elaborate US sting in 2008, when he was arrested at a hotel in the Thai capital Bangkok, to the anger of the Russian government.

He was extradited two years later and has spent the past 12 years languishing in an American jail for

conspiring to support terrorists and kill Americans.

Brittney Griner, 31, is one of the best-known sportswomen in America.

During the US basketball season she is a star centre for Phoenix Mercury in the WNBA. Her only reason for flying to Moscow was to play in Russia during the off-season in the US. She told her Russian trial that the cannabis oil found in her bag had been an "honest mistake".

El Salvador: Thousands of troops surround city in gang crackdown

Around 10,000 troops have surrounded the city of Soyapango in El Salvador as part of a massive crackdown on gangs, President Nayib Bukele has announced.

All roads leading to the city have been blocked, and special forces have been searching houses for gang members.

Officers have also been stopping everyone attempting to leave the city and checking identity papers.

The operation is part of a massive crackdown on gangs after a surge in violence earlier this year.

The justice minister said 12 people had been arrested so far.

Soyapango is one of El Salvador's largest cities and is home to more than 290,000 people. The city - which sits just 13 km (8 miles) west of the capital San Salvador - has long been known as a hub for gang activity.

"As of this moment, the municipality of Soyapango is totally surrounded," President Bukele wrote on Twitter. "Extraction

teams from the police and the army are tasked with extricating all the gang members still there one by one."

He added that ordinary people "have nothing to fear" and said that the crackdown was part of "an operation against criminals, not against honest citizens".

Since Mr Bukele announced a state of emergency in late March, more than 58,000 people have been jailed by authorities in the country of 6.5 million people.

Rights groups have criticised the heavy handed nature of the crackdown, saying the measures, which allow police to arrest suspects without warrants, have led to arbitrary detentions.

But Mr Bukele's allies say the crackdown is necessary after a wave of homicides culminated with gangs being blamed for 62 murders in a single day on 26 March.

A recent poll taken by the Central American University (UCA) found that 75.9 percent of Salvadorans approved of the state of emergency.

More classified documents found on Trump property

Attorneys for Donald Trump discovered two classified items among materials retrieved from a Florida storage unit rented for the former president, the Washington Post reports.

Trump hired an outside firm to search his properties for any classified items, in order to comply with a federal grand jury subpoena issued in May. The former president is under investigation for unlawfully retaining secret material after leaving the White House last year, which led to the FBI's search of his Mar-a-Lago property in August.

The ultimate significance of the classified material in the storage unit is not immediately clear, but its presence there indicates Mar-a-Lago was not the only place where Trump kept classified material. It also provides further evidence that Trump and his team did not fully comply with a May grand jury subpoena that sought all documents marked

classified still in possession of the post-presidential office.

In other Trump news, a Manhattan jury has found two Trump Organization companies guilty on multiple charges of criminal tax fraud and falsifying business records connected to a 15-year scheme to defraud tax authorities by failing to report and pay taxes on compensation for top executives.

The Trump Corp. and Trump Payroll Corp. were found guilty on all charges they faced.

The Trump Organization could face a maximum of \$1.61 million in fines when sentenced in mid-January. The company is not at risk of being dismantled because there is no mechanism under New York law that would dissolve the company.

However, a felony conviction could impact its ability to do business or obtain loans or contracts.

Iran hangs protester in first known execution related to mass demonstrations

Iran has executed a man for injuring a paramilitary officer in the first known execution linked to protests that have swept the country since September, state media reported Thursday.

The protester was identified as Mohsen Shekari. He was reportedly convicted of "waging war against God" for stabbing a member of the Basij paramilitary force at a protest in Tehran on September 23.

Shekari was sentenced to death on October 23, and executed by hanging on Thursday morning, according to Mizan Online. It was the first execution connected to the protests to be publicly reported by state media.

Iran Human Rights, a non-profit rights organization which has members inside and outside the country, has called for a strong international response to the execution.

"His execution must be met with the strongest possible reactions. Otherwise, we will be facing daily executions of protesters who are protesting for their fundamental

human rights," said the group's director Mahmood Amiry-Moghaddam.

Amiry-Moghaddam said that Shekari was executed without any due process or access to a lawyer of his choice in a "show trial" by the Revolutionary Court.

Iran's former president Mohammad Khatami on Tuesday urged the current government to be more lenient with protesters.

In a message ahead of Students' Day on December 7 - which marks the anniversary of the murder of three university students by Iranian police under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's regime in 1953 - the reformist former leader said the government must listen to the demonstrators before it is too late.

Other Iranian public figures have also recently called on the government to take action to listen and protect protesters.

Prominent Iranian Sunni cleric Molavi Abdolhamid Ismaelzahi on Tuesday called on the country's judiciary to investigate and prosecute individuals abusing women in prisons.

Belizean products showcased at Taiwan Coffee, Tea and Wine Expo

By William Ysaguirre

Eight Belizean small and medium enterprises showcased their products at the annual Taiwan Coffee, Tea and Wine Expo in Taipei on November 18 -21. The Belize Trade and Investment Development Service (BELTRAIDE) supported their participation in the Expo and joined the Embassy of the Republic of China in Taiwan in honoring these innovative entrepreneurs in a certificate ceremony at the ITVET in Belize City on Tuesday afternoon, December 6.

These enterprises included household names like Marie Sharp's hot sauces and preserves and Travelers Liquors. Taiwan's Ambassador to Belize H.E. David Kuan-Chou Chien joined BELTRAIDE Executive Director Leroy Almendarez PhD in presenting the certificates of achievement to Marie Sharp and Travelers' chief executive officer Magali Perdomo-Gabb.

The Economic Cooperation Agreement between Belize and Taiwan, which came into effect



Belizean Entrepreneurs showcase in Taiwan Expo

on January 15 this year, has significantly boosted bilateral trade between our two countries, Ambassador Chien noted. The ECA allows 199 Belizean products, including lobster, beef, pork, chicken, juice and sugar, to enjoy preferential tariffs for entry into Taiwan. It also provides preferential entry into Belize for 33 categories of Taiwan's products, including flat-rolled steel tools, brakes and cycle parts.

The high quality of "Made in Belize" products have assured them competitive access in Taiwan's markets, which has helped Belize's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic by generating much needed foreign exchange and creating employment, the Ambassador cited happily. The Central American Trade Office in Taiwan has partnered with BELTRAIDE and the Taiwan Embassy



Taiwan's Ambassador to Belize H.E. David Kuan-Chou Chien

to help Belizean producers to showcase their products at several other international Expos in Taiwan, such as the Taiwan International Food Show, the Taichung International Tea, Vine, Coffee and Bakery Show and the Kaohsiung Food Show, were tens of thousands of visitors and importers got to sample the top quality of Belizean products.

Julio Saqui began making his Che'il Mayan Dark Chocolate from organically grown Belizean cacao in 2010, and has diversified his product line to include cacao tea, cacao nibs, Instant Choco Maya, cacao powder, raw cacao, roasted and sun-dried cacao beans, and milk chocolate bars, which come in regular,

mint, orange and chilli flavors. Che'il Mayan Chocolate is based in Maya Center Village at the entrance to the Cockscomb Basin Reserve, Stann Creek district

James and Sulema Mesh began growing and producing their gourmet brand, Ox'Mul Coffee, in San Antonio Village, Cayo district, in March 2021. They market their products on Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp and are willing to ship their orders anywhere, once the customer pays shipping and handling.

Derrol Vernon has been making local wines with his family for a number of years, but launched his new product line this past year under the "Wine Time" offering fine wines in chardonnay,

Moscato, sangria and rosé flavors.

Joanne Beaumont's Belize chocolate was also promoted at the Expo. She first began making chocolate to participate in the Toledo Cacao Festival in 2007, and established her Belize Chocolate Company in San Pedro, Ambergris Caye 10 years ago, and has since branched out to Caye Caulker.

Other companies who exhibited their products included Gallon Jug Estates Ltd and Mahogany Chocolate Ltd.

Belize's Ambassador to Taiwan H.E. Candice Pitts PhD also offered her congratulations, via pre-recorded video, to the eight enterprises for the top billing their products received at the Taiwan Expo.

STATUTORY NOTICE

TO CREDITORS

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN pursuant to Section 36 of the *Administration of Estates Act*, Chapter 197 of the Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2020 that all creditors having any claims or demands upon or against the **Estate of Conrad Edison Staine**, deceased, of 94 Barrack Road, Belize City, Belize District, Belize, who died on the 19th day of May, 2020 in whose estate Grant of Probate has been granted to **Kathleen Melba Staine** of #64 University Heights, Belize City, Belize District, Belize, should lodge such claims or demands with the said **Kathleen Melba Staine, c/o Marin Young & Co LLP**, Attorneys-at-Law, No. 828 Coney Drive, 3rd Floor, Belize City, Belize District, Belize, on or before the expiration of three months from the first publication hereof AND NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that at the expiration of the said three months the Executrix shall proceed to distribute the assets of the said **Conrad Edison Staine**, deceased, amongst the parties entitled thereto having regard to all the claims and demands of which particulars are lodged and the Executrix shall not be liable for the assets of the deceased or any part thereof so distributed to any person or persons whose claims or demands they shall not then have had notice.

DATED the 5th day of December, 2022

Marin Young & Co LLP
Attorneys-at-Law for the
Estate of Conrad Edison Staine



FDA approved a 1st-of-its-kind treatment made from human poop What does it do?

For the first time, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved a treatment that's made using donated human poop, the agency announced (opens in new tab) Wednesday (Nov. 30). The treatment, called Rebyota, contains gut bacteria collected from the stool of healthy human donors and is approved for the prevention of a potentially life-

antibiotic-resistant strains of *C. diff*, and what's more, they can further disrupt the microbiome and sometimes worsen the infection, according to The Scientist. To get at the root cause of the problem — the unbalanced gut microbiome — doctors have increasingly turned to so-called fecal microbiota transplants.

Previously considered an

the therapy often hasn't been covered by insurance, The Scientist reported.

But now, Rebyota is available as the first FDA-approved "fecal microbiota product." In a late-stage clinical trial, the one-dose treatment reduced the rate of *C. diff* flare-ups by 29.4% in the eight weeks after antibiotic treatment, compared with a placebo, STAT reported (opens in new tab). Taking two clinical trials of the treatment into account, the success rate of the treatment "was significantly higher in the Rebyota group (70.6%) than in the placebo group (57.5%)," the FDA noted.

"Today's approval of Rebyota is an advance in caring for patients who have recurrent *C. difficile* infection [CDI]," Dr. Peter Marks (opens in new tab), director of the FDA's Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, said in the agency's statement. "As the first FDA-approved fecal microbiota product, today's action represents an important milestone, as it provides an additional approved option to prevent recurrent CDI."

In clinical trials, the most common side effects of Rebyota were abdominal pain, diarrhea, abdominal bloating, gas and

nausea. And although the donated feces is carefully screened for pathogens, the treatment does carry some risk of transmitting infectious agents, and it may also contain food allergens, the FDA noted. "The potential for the product to cause adverse reactions due to food allergens is unknown," the agency's statement reads.



threatening bacterial infection.

By administering the liquid treatment into a patient's rectum through a tube, doctors can help restore balance to the patient's gut microbiome, the community of microbes living in the lower digestive tract.

Rebyota is approved for use in people ages 18 and older who have recently been treated for recurrent infections with the bacterium *Clostridioides difficile*, commonly called *C. diff* for short. *C. diff* can rapidly take over the gut if the normal microbiome gets disrupted — for example, as a result of antibiotic use. People aged 65 and older, those with weakened immune systems and those who have recently stayed in a hospital or nursing home face the highest risk of infection. As *C. diff* multiplies in the gut, the bacteria release toxins that trigger diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and inflammation of the colon (colitis). Sometimes, the infections can lead to organ failure and even death, according to the FDA.

C. diff is estimated to cause about half a million infections in the U.S. each year, and about 1 in 6 patients who develop the infection will get it again within two to eight weeks of recovering, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

These recurrent infections can be treated with antibiotics, but the drugs don't always work against aggressive,

"investigational" treatment by the FDA, these transplants involve transferring screened donor stool into the patient's gut via a colonoscopy, enema or pill. However, sourcing and screening the stool presents a challenge, meaning the transplants haven't been readily available everywhere, and the lack of an FDA-approved product means



VACANCY

The Social Security Board invites applications from suitably qualified persons to fill the role of **MANAGER, POLICY AND AFFILIATE RELATIONS** in its Policy, Research and Actuarial Services Division, SSB Headquarters, Belmopan.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS:
Advanced university degree (Master's Degree or equivalent degree) in Social Protection, Social Sciences, Demography/ Population Studies, Public/Social Policy, or Public Sector Management, with five (5) years' experience in any one or combination of the following areas: Social protection analysis; social protection management; public/social policy; demography/population studies; preparation of economic and socio-economic plans and related policy formulation and implementation; socio-demographic development planning; and other related areas.

Visit our website at www.socialsecurity.org.bz/vacancy-announcement/ to view further details and requirements on this position.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE:
Application packages containing application letter, resume, two (2) recent letters of recommendation, copies of degree, certifications and other relevant academic credentials and current police record or receipt for record may be submitted via email to:

Manager, HR Strategies, HR Services, SSB Headquarters, Belmopan at: dlindo@socialsecurity.org.bz
HR Advisor, Policy & Strategy, HR Services, SSB Headquarters, Belmopan at: fphillips@socialsecurity.org.bz
Copy emails to: General Manager, Human Resources, SSB Headquarters, Belmopan at: odakers@socialsecurity.org.bz

Email Subject Line: "Application for Manager, Policy and Affiliate Relations"

APPLICATION DEADLINE: December 15th, 2022



FUN FACTS!

Some Little Known Facts About the Hawaiian Language



Hawaii is the only US state with two official languages.

In 1978 the state constitution gave the Hawaiian language an official status. In January of this year the state decided to make native Hawaiian interpreters available in court. They began offering this service after a native Hawaiian professor refused to speak anything but Hawaiian during a court appearance.

There's also a third, unofficial language: Pidgin (or Hawaiian Creole English).

This creole language is the combination of Hawaiian and English. However, while it contains elements of both languages, it's not a pidgin language at all. As its other name, "Hawaiian Cre-

ole English," implies, Pidgin is a complete language on its own.

About 600,000 people speak Pidgin, mostly native Hawaiians. An additional 400,000 speak it as a second language. Advertisers often use it to target local Hawaiians.

When Captain Cook discovered the Hawaiian Islands, there were somewhere between 400,000-800,000 native Hawaiians speaking the language. With only around 2,000 native speakers now, UNESCO classifies Hawaiian as "critically endangered." However, language preservation initiatives like immersion preschools are helping the language make a comeback. According to the latest American Community Survey, at least 18,000

people claim to speak Hawaiian at home.

There is one place where Hawaiian still reigns supreme. On the tiny island of Ni'ihau, home to fewer than 170 people, residents continue to speak Hawaiian as the language of everyday life.

Hawaiian is written in the Latin script, like English. However, unlike English, Hawaiian only uses 13 letters: 8 consonants and five vowels.

If you were going to say your ABCs in Hawaiian, it would go something like this:

A E H I K L M N O
P U W

There's also a glotal stop, the Okina, indicated by an apostrophe.

"Aloha" is used as a greeting, but it means much more than

"hello." It can mean "love," "affection," "peace," "mercy" and "to be in the presence of the divinity." There's no English equivalent. The word is so central to Hawaiian culture that when Chicago-based Aloha Poke tried to trademark it as part of their name this year, native Hawaiians created a social media uproar in response.

It's important to get these cultural nuances right, and that's where your language services provider comes in. At United Language Group, we offer translation, interpreting, global marketing and so much more. Contact us today to find out how we can give your organization Total Language Confidence.



Brown brought Blue!

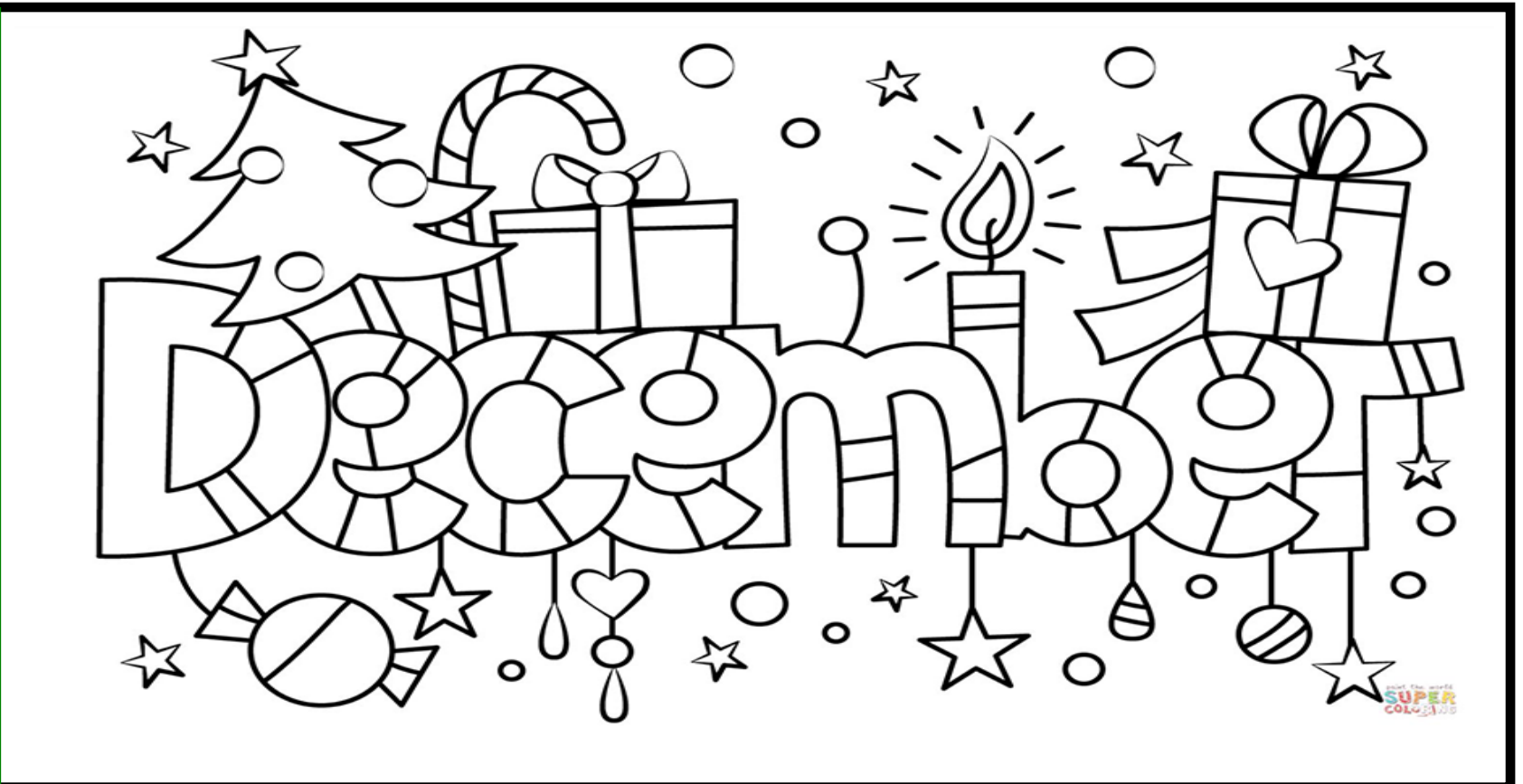
DID YOU KNOW?
10,000 years ago, everyone's eyes were brown until someone living by the Black Sea developed a genetic mutation turning brown eyes blue.



Female Inventors Rock!

DID YOU KNOW ?
Bulletproof vests, fire escapes, windshield wipers and laser printers were invented by women.

COLORE ME



Sports Guild

Pele and Surprising 2022 World Cup update!!

By Leon C. Guild

While the first round of the knockout stage had some spectacular moments of penalty shootouts and more than enough highlight reel goals, now that we are down to the quarter finals it is expected to keep fans both at home and those in the stadium at Qatar on the edge of their seats.

But now that we are down to 8 countries and probably your favorite may have been eliminated you may be asking, 'Who are the favorites to win the 2022 World Cup?' The latest 2022 FIFA World Cup quarterfinal odds from Caesars Sportsbook list Brazil, Argentina, Portugal and France as the favorites in their respective matches. My personal favorites are of course France and Brazil.

And speaking of Brazil the recent rumors that football legend Pele has died much to your delight are actually false. As per the latest reports, Pele, whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento is showing progressive improvement after being hospitalized recently for respiratory infection and to re-evaluate his treatment for colon cancer. Pele's daughter Flavia Nascimento reassured the fans by saying he's not receiving end-of-



Edson "Pele" do Nascimento

life care as claimed by some reports. He remained in a regular hospital room with stable vital signs and was conscious, medical staff at Sao Paulo's Albert Einstein Hospital told reporters. Moreover, on 5 December 2022, Pele said he'll watch the FIFA world cup match Brazil and South Korea from hospital. Hence the claim made in the post is FALSE.

In any case, Japan had a surprising performance at the 2022 world Cup. The country made their seventh and most recent appearance at the finals at the 2022 tournament in Qatar. In 2018, Japan became the first ever Asian nation to beat a side from South America, after they won 2-1 against Colombia in the group stage. As co-hosts of the World Cup with

Japan in 2002, South Korea had reached the semi-finals under Dutch coach Guus Hiddink and went down in football history as the first team from outside Europe and the Americas to reach the last four. But now they have been eliminated from the competition due to a penalty shootout in which Croatia won at the 2022 World Cup to progress to the quarter-finals in Qatar. Japan missed three spot kicks during the shootout while Croatia only missed one. The penalty shootout came after a 1-1 draw in normal time.

And Japan isn't the only country making historical a debut in the advance stages of the championship, Morocco made history on Tuesday by knocking Spain out

of the World Cup. The North African side won 3-0 on penalties after a goalless result on the pitch, becoming the first Arab team to reach the final eight stage of the FIFA World Cup. Moroccan player Achraf Hakimi, who was born and raised in Madrid, scored the decisive penalty which sent Spain out of the tournament. He ran straight to his mother afterwards, kissing and hugging her. Now

doesn't that just make you feel all warm and cozy inside?!

Now, the duel is among Netherlands, Argentina, Croatia, Brazil, England, France, Morocco, and Portugal. And in all this fantastic mixup of human agility, I can't take my mind of all the millions be made and spent and passed around this one single event.

As a player in the leagues you are constantly in the spotlight and you get a little something however lucrative your role may be but the real winners are always the big boys at the top. The earnings from this World Cup cycle are \$1bn more than those generated from the 2018 tournament in Russia which was \$6.4bn. 21-Nov-2022 . FIFA has earned an unprecedented \$7.5bn in revenue through four years of commercial deals tied to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, the governing body of football says. Proving once again that 'wars' no matter what form they take is always

big money business. Too bad we don't have a military...(humor intended) You can run entire countries with that kind of money!! Well, as we continue to 'sip waata' and mind our business here in the Caribbean it is still a far fetched (no offence) dream for us to make it into the finals. But in the meantime you cannot take away a man's right to dream. It is one of the most important faculties that we have that sets up apart from other intelligent primates and lower life forms on the planet and we absolutely must exercise it.

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.



 **Atlantic Bank**

Christmas Holiday Opening Hours

December 23, 2022:
All Branches and Drive Thrus close at 3:00PM

December 30, 2022:
All Branches and Drive Thrus close at 1:00PM

Happy Holidays
from the Management & Staff of Atlantic Bank

DDG González: Multilateral trading system must do more to avert food security crisis

By World Trade Organization

WTO rules are key to well-functioning global agricultural markets, and more needs to be done to strengthen the rules-based trading system in light of the ongoing food and fertilizer crisis, Deputy Director-General Anabel González stressed at the opening of an Agri-Food Business Day event held on 8 December at the WTO. Bringing together leaders from top agri-food companies, the agriculture sector and industry associations, farm leaders and WTO

members, the high-level event examined trade obstacles impeding agri-food trade and explored solutions to tackle bottlenecks and address food insecurity.

In her opening remarks, DDG González highlighted the seriousness of the food crisis that the world is facing due to an array of factors, the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in the Black Sea region, high inflation and a potential economic recession, and the effects of climate change.

Citing the latest

figures of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, she noted that food prices, despite dropping from their peak in March this year, still remain 2 per cent higher than last year. Notably, the global food import bill is forecast to surge to an all-time high in 2022, exceeding USD 2 trillion, and the global agricultural input import bill (mainly fertilizer) is forecast to reach around USD 424 billion in 2022, a leap of 50 per cent compared to 2021.

DDG González said that in the face of pressing challenges,

trade has a crucial role to play in ensuring global food security, since "trade feeds one in every six people around the world". She drew attention to WTO members' quick action in response to the food crisis, highlighting their success in reaching three outcomes at the 12th Ministerial Conference (MC12) in June this year which have food security at their core. These include a declaration on the emergency response to food insecurity, a decision to support World Food Programme

food purchases, and a sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) declaration to modernize the SPS Agreement, which regulates food, animal and plant standards.

She warned of the worrying trend of export restrictions since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, noting that 33 members and observers had introduced 72 export-restrictive measures on food and feed and six on fertilizers, of which only 20 have since been phased out. She urged governments to implement the MC12 outcomes, refrain from export restrictions and promote free trade at a time of crisis. "No one country can go it alone, whether on food, vaccines and pharmaceuticals, or any other product," she emphasized.

DDG González asked participants not to forget that the WTO has come a long way in liberalizing agricultural trade and has made an enormous difference to global food security by putting in place binding rules that have brought down trade barriers and significantly levelled the global playing field.

She indicated that global trade in agricultural products has more than tripled since the Agreement on Agriculture entered into force in 1996 and is now worth over USD 1.8 trillion. She added that South-South agricultural trade has also thrived and now accounts for one quarter of total agricultural trade flows.

There were positive signs even during the crisis, she said, referring to the WTO Trade Monitoring Database, which indicates that 61 members and observers have rolled out 55 trade facilitative measures on food and feed, and eight on fertilizers. These signs show that "many WTO members have realized that it is in their interest to unilaterally open their markets further

on food, feed and fertilizer, so as to lower food price inflation domestically," she said.

Looking ahead, DDG González highlighted that more needs to be done at the WTO to bolster global food security. She underlined the importance of continuing the agricultural trade reform process, closing the gap between applied and bound agricultural subsidies and tariff rates, and continuing to address non-tariff barriers to agricultural trade. "The reform process must continue to go forward. The world cannot afford to have the WTO fail," she said.

DDG González also drew attention to a newly-established work programme aimed at helping address the food security concerns of least-developed countries (LDCs) and net food-importing countries (NFIDCs) in line with the MC12 mandate. The working group established under the programme will discuss themes of particular interest to LDCs and NFIDCs in the coming year, with the aim of making a set of recommendations for the Committee on Agriculture to consider no later than the end of November 2023.

She expressed the hope that members can maintain high ambitions in the forthcoming discussions "because this is a topic that is critically important for many of these countries and for the world at large," she added.

The opening session was followed by five roundtables that delved into specific topics, including: resilient global food and agricultural value chains; food standards for better functioning global value chains; trade facilitation, digitalization and e-commerce; the environmental sustainability of global value chains; and industry views on the rules-based multilateral trading system.

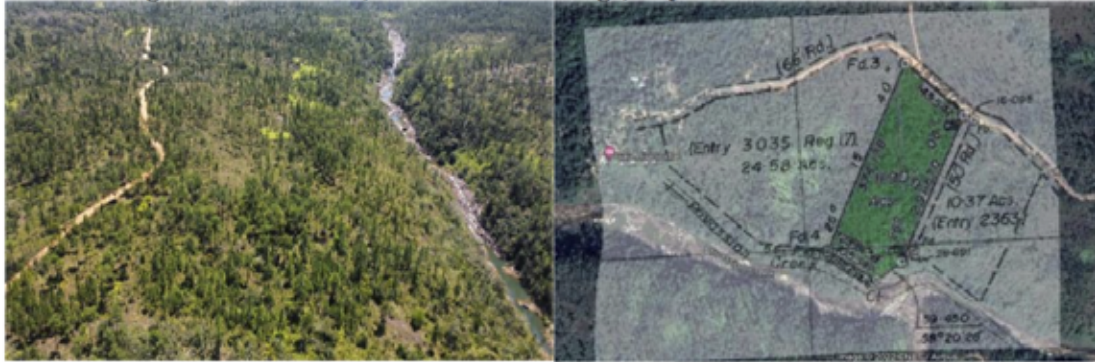
BELIZEPROPERTYAUCTIONS.COM

COUNTRYWIDE PUBLIC AUCTION SALE: PROPERTY

Privassion Creek, Mountain Pine Ridge, Cayo District

BY ORDER of the Supreme Court of Belize, Licensed Auctioneer Christiana R. Castillo is selling ONLINE via belizepropertyauctions.com the following property. Sale currently running until 1st February 2023. Within this period, a Public Auction Sale will expire on Monday 19th December 2022 and thereafter fortnightly on the dates and times listed on the website until this property is sold.

11.90 ACRES along Privassion Creek, Mountain Pine Ridge, Cayo District:



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PRESS RELEASE

FORTIS BELIZE LTD (formerly BECOL), in collaboration with the National Emergency Management Organization (NEMO), the Department of Environment (DOE), and the Ministry of Health (MOH) will host a virtual public discussion for communities downstream of the FORTIS BELIZE hydroelectric facilities and the general public on Tuesday, December 20th, 2022. The virtual public meeting will take place from 2pm to 4:00pm and will be live-streamed on the Government of Belize Press Office Facebook page, the Love FM Facebook page, and on Love TV. This interactive discussion is aimed at educating and informing residents and stakeholders on issues such as the Early Warning System (EWS) and related emergency procedures, mercury-in-fish data, water quality of the Macal, and other topics that may be of concern to stakeholders.

This exercise is an ongoing effort by FORTIS BELIZE LTD/NEMO/DOE/MOH to inform and educate the public and to safeguard the wellbeing of the communities along the Macal River. All stakeholders and the general public are encouraged to tune in to the live broadcast.

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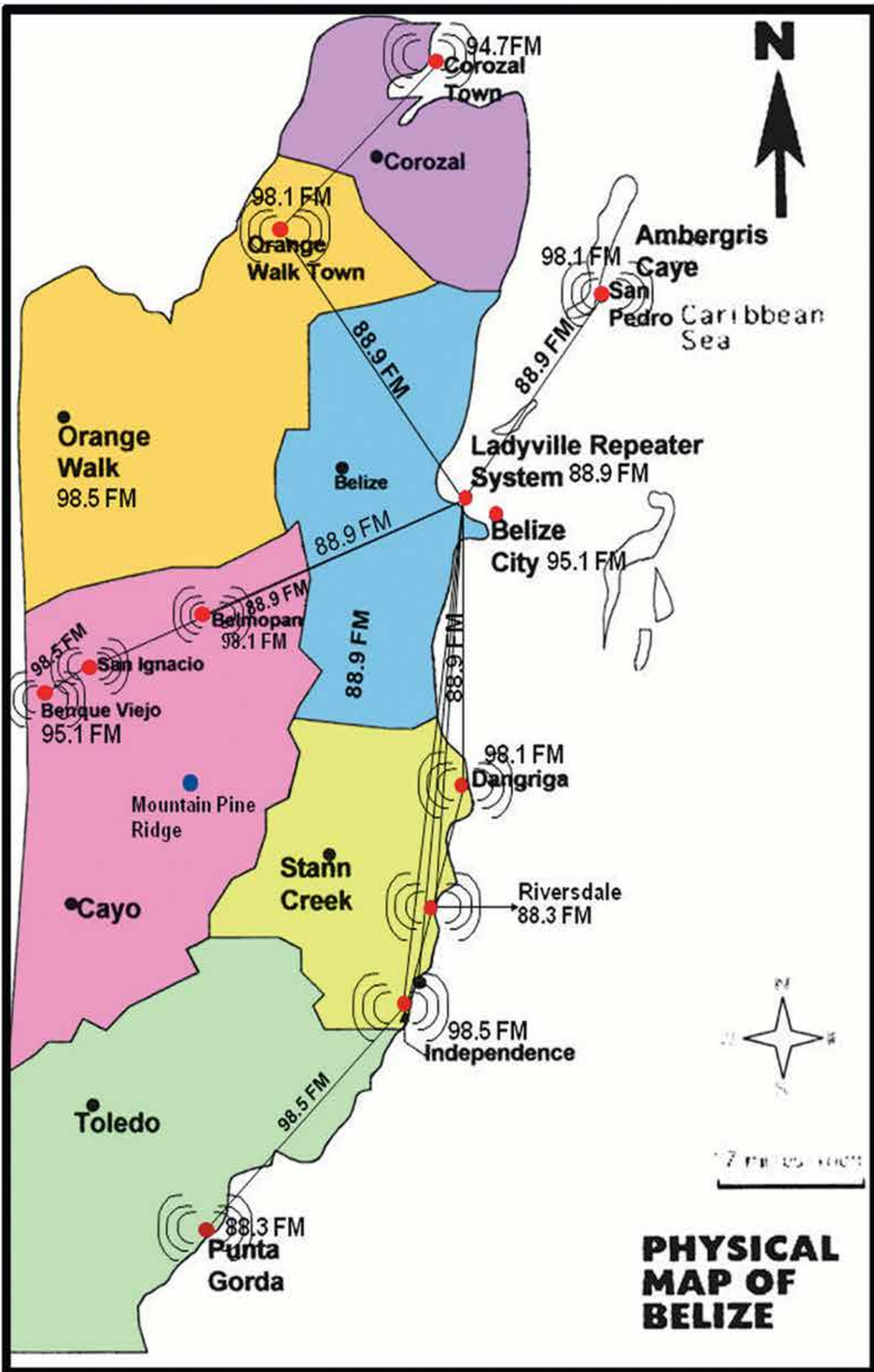
Experiencing any of the following symptoms?

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- Sprains
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- Diabetic ulcers
- Stress Fractures
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LOVE NEWS AND MUSIC POWER



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Happy Holidays!

from the Board of Directors, Management and Staff of Belize Water Services

Our Holidays Office Hours

Offices Close	Offices Re-open
Friday, December 23, 2022— 1:00 PM	Tuesday, December 27, 2022
Friday, December 30, 2022— 1:00 PM	Tuesday, January 3, 2023

****NB: The Belize City Office will be closed on Saturday, December 24, 2022 and Saturday, December 31, 2022.**

Have a safe and blessed holidays!