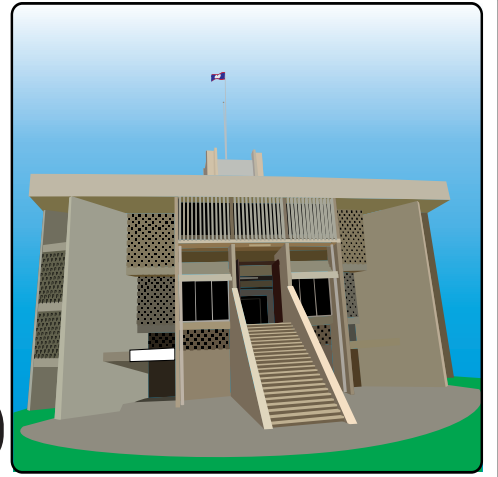




Capital Weekly

From the Heart of the Nation to the Soul of the People



No. 017

Thursday, December 29, 2011

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Better Than Expected!

Economy Grows By over 3 percent in 2011

Will Strengthen, Broaden and Deepen in 2012

No matter how bad the outgoing year, there is something about the New Year that invariably sparks new hope. But for Belize, there is more, much more to hang our hopes on as we bid farewell to 2011 and greet the New Year, 2012.

True, man shall not live by bread alone, but the performance of the Belize Economy in the year ending is very encouraging news, to say the least, especially when compared with other countries around us.

The figures coming out of the statistical institute, as the Prime Minister notes in his New Year's address, indicate that the Belize Economy grew by over 3 percent, which is better than projected at the start of the year, and almost one full percentage point above



Prime Minister Hon. Dean Barrow

the 2.4 % growth recorded for the previous year.

Offering further details on the breakdown of the overall growth, the PM states, "when we look at the particular sectors that are most responsible for this picture of economic advance, the panorama is even more encouraging.

Up to September it was the Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector that was one of the leaders, showing a 7.7% increase. And the Corozal Free Zone alone was responsible for a business rebound of 23% in improved year-on-year sales. Over the three quarters, Hotels and Restaurants grew by 2.1% as a consequence of a 3.3% increase in overnight tourists; and Transport and Communications

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Christmas Big in Belmopan !



Honourable John Saldivar and Mrs. Saldivar

Residents of the Capital City this year had their fair share of Christmas and much, much more—from the heart-warming Tree-Lighting to the invigorating Christmas parade, to the belly-bursting ham and turkey baskets. Then to top it all off, they had quite a bram to the pulsating sounds of a Mexican Box.

The Tree Lighting ceremony and Christmas parade we brought you images of in our two most recent editions of Capital Weekly. The bram, we'll get to in few; but first to the belly-busting ham and turkey baskets.

Continued on Page 6

Sales Up

23 %

in Free Zone

Story on Page 3



*David Ackierman,
Executive Chairman*

From the Desk of the Chairman

A New Leaf- A New Lease



Delroy Cuthkelvin
Chairman, Editorial Board

New Year's is, without a doubt, our most favorite time of the year. There is something about turning a new leaf that invariably excites and inspires us.

This New Year, for Belizeans, is particularly special as we seem not only to be turning a new leaf, but turning the corner on various fronts.

Having just recorded, in 2011, our highest GDP growth rate since the recession hit home, we certainly appear to be turning the corner on the economic front as, by all accounts (even the IMF), we have weathered the storm better than all our peers in the Caribbean Community.

Having taken control of our essential utilities, enshrining

majority public ownership in the Constitution, we have finally rid ourselves of systematic exploitation at the hands of the modern-day slave masters; and things are quickly turning around with lower rates, even as we turn a respectable profit on our investments in homegrown, Belizean-owned companies.

Even crime and violence, which in recent times have altered our very way of life, appear to be finally taking a turn for the better. We're certainly not out of the woods yet, far from it, and there could be many daunting curves ahead, but the one turn we cannot afford is that of turning back.

Hopeless youths and innocent victims, it appears, are finally getting a new lease on life, and for such small mercies we must say thanks, even as we pray that the relative peace holds, and as we work harder to ensure that it does.

Like every other new year, this one offers an opportunity to turn a new leaf. But would to God—as the early signs seem to be showing—it also offers our People and our Nation a new lease on life.

Christmas Message by Deputy Prime Minister



Hon. Gaspar Vega
Deputy Prime Minister

I am very happy to express my warmest greetings and best wishes to all Belizeans celebrating Christmas.

Each year at this time we celebrate the birth of our Lord. We recall the remarkable story of his birth in Bethlehem, and we are moved to recognize his birth each day in our lives – through acts of compassion, goodwill, and love.

This past year has been a time of unparalleled natural disasters, economic troubles and political upheavals around the world. For such a time as this, reflecting on this world and perhaps even our own needs at home, there could be cause for a little feeling of distress.

Yet Christmas is about hope, as it was two thou-

sand years ago when our savior was born.

I want to take this opportunity to assure you that your UDP government will continue-- in the next year-- to steer the ship of state with the same Fairness, Prudence and Respect that has become the hallmark of this administration.

On behalf of our Government, my family, and myself, I take this opportunity to say Season's Greetings to you and your family, and may your holiday season and the coming year be blessed with happiness, prosperity and hope.

**M E R R Y
C H R I S T M A S S
A N D A P R O S -
P R O U S N E W Y E A R
T O Y O U A L L !**

Capital Weekly

*From the Heart of the Nation
To the Soul of the People*

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Sales Up 23 % in Free Zone

Equipped and Well Managed Under the Current Administration

(Reproduced, in part, from the Northern Star Newspaper)



The entrance to the Corozal Commercial Free Zone

In February 2008, the General Elections brought the dawn of a new United Democratic Party Government. Along with that new Government came new management for the Corozal Free Zone.

The expectations of investors at the Zone were tempered by questions. Changes were met with scepticism as millions of dollars were at stake and the new direction was uncertain. From the inception of the takeover of this new management of the Corozal Free Zone it became evident

able condition having being privatized costing the management \$600,000.00 per annum.

3. Security Personnel were working under inhumane conditions with very limited resources.

4. The infrastructure was in a sorrowful condition. Streets were in bad shape. Garbage was scattered all over the place and the drainage was a huge problem irrespective of the fact that the then P.U.P Government paid two million dollars for a thorough restructuring.

5. There were repeated incidences of fire.

2. The changes led to sound fiscal management of the Zone and a transparent financial system where the first year's audit reflected \$901,000.00 profit as compared to \$30,000.00 previously. Also put in place was a yearly Social Interventions Program to the tune of some \$40,000.00 per annum.

3. The Zone's Infrastructure was upgraded. Streets paved, drainage improved drastically, which automatically minimized the flooding problems. Garbage collection under this new Corozal

reducing the spate of burglaries. Yet the management has seen savings of over \$120,000.00 per annum by centralizing the security services.

5. With the acquisition of a fire truck some two years ago and the construction of a fire station with all amenities, the CFZ has seen reduced incidences of fire. There has been only one incidence of fire since the upgrading of the CFZ Fire Department.

6. Employment capacity has been maintained at a stable level of basically 2,700 workers.



Inside the Corozal Commercial Free Zone

Free Zone (CFZ) Management has been more cost effective and the services have been greatly improved, with the procurement of two compactor trucks. Also restructured was the landscaping at the entrance to the CFZ, giving a more picturesque view of the zone.

4. Completely upgraded and restructured were the Security Services under CFZ Management, creating a more investor and visitor friendly atmosphere, while improving the working conditions of the employees. (Security hut, booths and bathroom facilities were upgraded with all amenities)

There is now more visible security patrols which increases investor and visitor confidence while

Since the takeover in 2008, this new management has shown relentless efforts in improving the conditions of the Corozal Free Zone and by extension the livelihood of all involved with the CFZ.

As we come to the end of 2011, the Free Zone is registering an impressive increase in year to year sales, up by as much as 23 percent, and helping to boost the nation's overall economic growth rate.

All this has happened less than one year after the free zone management, assisted by this government took steps to avert an impending foreign exchange crisis.

What a difference honest and effective management makes!



Two Garbage trucks obtained by the new Management

that the complete network was in shambles. A lot of work had to be done and drastic measures had to be implemented in light of the sorrowful situation inherited.

The Corozal Free Zone was plagued with the following problems before the advent of the new management in 2008.

1. Gross mismanagement of the Corozal Free Zone finances reflecting in the bills accountable to the Banks and the Private Sector. The audit for 2007 reflected profits of only BZ \$30,000.00 per annum.

2. The Security System was in the most deplor-

6. Garbage collection had been privatized, yet the zone was in very unhygienic conditions.

The Corozal Free Zone under this new management today has realized the following:

1. The administration of the Zone was restructured and persons with the necessary capacity put in place. The result was that a better Management / Private Sector relationship was established recognizing the Corozal Free Zone Chamber of Commerce as the liaison between management and investors, automatically uplifting investor confidence.



Fire truck acquired by the new Feee Zone Management

Prime Minister's New Year's Message

No installment in any of the annual increments by which we most reckon the passage of time, is ever completely without trials and tribulations.

That is why as human beings, as societies, as nations, we always welcome the new year with expectation and excitement. It is a chance to recover from adversity in the preceding twelve months, to do better and be better. The ageless ritual of ringing out the old and ringing in the new, is thus emblematic of the eternal capacity for hope and renewal. And this, in turn, is part of God's legacy to the Race; to all thinking, sentient creatures that believe in Him.

But while last year was, like all others, not without difficulties, they were small ones. Indeed, given the global situation; given the continuing fiscal, debt and joblessness problems of the US; and given the absolute crisis in which Europe continued to be engulfed, economically our country did well. And a look at the numbers will serve to confirm what, in all the circumstances, is a performance for which we must give thanks.

The Statistical



*Hon. Dean Barrow
Prime Minister of Belize*

Institute of Belize reports that for the first nine months of the year, our economy grew by 2.7% as compared to 1.8% for the same period in 2010. Last quarter growth is traditionally most robust, so that we are well on track to exceed the overall 3% GDP increase for 2011 that I had predicted on Independence Day. This is a significant jump and will be almost one full percentage point above the 2.4% growth recorded for the previous year.

When we look at the particular sectors that are most responsible for this picture of economic advance, the panorama is even more encouraging. Up to September it was the Wholesale and Retail Trade Sector that

was one of the leaders, showing a 7.7% increase. And the Corozal Free Zone alone was responsible for a business rebound of 23% in improved year-on-year sales. Over the three quarters Hotels and Restaurants grew by 2.1% as a consequence of a 3.3% increase in overnight tourists; and Transport and Communications went up by 2.5%. Construction was also 7.4% better. But it was Fishing that led all comers with a 14.5% hike. And while overall sugar production fell, ratios, quality and prices improved so that we are now poised for an outstanding new season. Finally, Inflation remained low at just over 2%.

It is on the basis of all this that I can say

that we were blessed in 2011. We easily outpaced 2010, and the story is even more remarkable if we go back to 2009. Then, we all remember, was when there was actual contraction; when the fall-out from the world recession threatened to swamp us completely.

The economic success of 2011 meant that increases in export earnings, including in particular from crude oil, enabled Government to consummate a great leap forward in cementing its social agenda. Job-creating infrastructure projects were implemented; educational and economic second chance opportunities were expanded; and the wind was fully in the sails of our signature home improvement, food pantry and cash transfer programs.

Our democracy was also in fine flower. We maintained our commitment to accessibility, transparency and accountability; and we continued our forward march to true nationalism by way of the Constitutional enshrinement of public ownership of our essential utilities.

Perhaps most noteworthy of all, we succeeded—certainly since September when we forged the Belize City gang truce in decelerating the incidence of senseless murders in this country. The signif-

Prime Minister's New Year's Message

ificant reduction in the homicide rate for the last four months of 2011 as compared to 2010, is great progress. And it comes at just the right point, when too many were beginning to feel that there could be no rescue from the abyss.

But the real purpose of this Message, is to look ahead; to assure one and all that the inherent promise and opportunity of the New Year will not be forgone. Efforts will be strengthened, commitments will be broadened, successes will be deepened.

In 2012, as one example, the infrastructure drive-and the jobs it brings-will scale new heights. The Jalacte Road in the South, the Blue Creek one in the North, the Macal River Crossing in the West, the comprehensive Belize City drainage and street works, will all be hitting full stride. The new Marion Jones stadium will be coming out of the ground, the new Civic Center will be rising from the rubble. The contract for the design and build component of the Solid Waste Management Project, has also been signed; and it will see 14 million dollars spent between January and July in Caye Caulker, San Pedro, San Ignacio and

Belize City. And their delayed rehabilitation and beautification drive for the District Towns will

now start by April, the World Bank assures us.

A countrywide money contribution for working mothers will join the apprenticeship, food subsidy and BOOST programs. And the drop-in centers in distressed Belize City neighbourhoods will help with community development, social recovery and violence prevention.

Millions of dollars will continue to fund Government's home improvement and home repairs across the nation; and every single registered surveyor in this country has now been contracted to work on the subdivision of the 4,709 acres identified by the Ministry of Lands for the allocation of building lots to first time landowners.

Our outreach to the poor and the middle class continues. They, and indeed all Belizeans, will be helped by the lower electricity rates that I promised in September, and which are now a certainty. BEL, owned at last by Government and people, has already accepted, by way of its submissions to the Public Utilities Commission, that rates must come down. And the PUC may well reduce even more what has been proposed by BEL. The final decision will be on January 31, and the new, lower rates should under the current law

take effect a few months thereafter. But we are a Government in a hurry to do good things. And the ease to the consumer, the ease in the cost of living, the ease to business and industry and agriculture, can't wait. Thus Government will amend the law to implement from the very next day, February 1, 2012, this historic decrease in what Belizeans pay for electricity.

But there is more that we offer by way of festal cheer. Unlike 2012, our vision of uplift and opportunity and egalitarianism is not newborn. But the underlining of fresh beginnings that always takes place on January 1, provides a proper opportunity for us to reassert our creed: that this Government's flame of social justice will never dim; that it will burn even brighter in the next twelve months. And our preoccupation with those at the margins, with those of fixed incomes, low incomes and no incomes, has caused us to hit on yet another idea for new year relief and assistance. Accordingly, I announce today that Government will purchase all mortgages of 50 thousand dollars and under, owned by the Belize Social Security Board. These number 780 and have a total aggregate value of 17 million dollars. Government will thereafter

write off these mortgages, forgiving the householders all of their loan obligations, and putting that money at their disposal to spend on the economy and generate more activity.

The notion of helping not just individuals but businesses in this way, brings me to the last point I wish to make. In all that we do, Government cannot forget the private sector. There is need for an equal partnership, and we made the right start late in 2011. This must be consolidated in the year ahead. Government is therefore, among other things, appointing a Business Development Facilitator in the Office of the Prime Minister to help oversee the new relationship.

I close by referring once again to the rebirth of optimism that is the special province of New Year celebrations. All across the globe, this is an occasion for the rekindling of inspiration. It is the annual re-start of the quest for human progress, of the alchemist mission to turn even brass into gold. In the case of Belize, our resolution is to re-dedicate and re-consecrate the crusade by which we build a shining, fair and just country. One that will be the envy of, and model for, the region and the world.

Happy New Year everyone, and God bless Belize.

Christmas Big in Belmopan !

Mucho Turkey, Ham and Bram



Hon. John Saldivar and volunteers on Christmas Eve carrying turkey and ham to the homes of Belmopan residents

Saldivar has always been generous to his constituents in season and out of season. But this time he really outdid himself as he and his team of volunteers delivered 1,000 turkeys and 500 hams. (In-

funds available for a little help to needy residents of each constituency this Christmas, supplemented by Saldivar and his committee's own fundraising efforts.

The ham and turkey train



Hon. John Saldivar personally delivering a hefty size turkey to a resident of Belmopan



Christmas Bram in session as hundreds of residents from Belmopan and surrounding communities came out to share in the fun



cidentally, if you add the number of turkeys to the number of hams delivered, you come up with the number of apples given out during the Christmas Parade last Monday night. A Boledo rake perhaps)

Saldivar was able to deliver all this through the Prime Minister's initiative of making special

circled the entire constituency of Belmopan, in the central areas, as well as the outlying communities of Salva Pan, San Martin, Maya Mopan and Las Flores. Saldivar himself and his team of volunteers, numbering in the fifties, made their rounds all day and into the night on Christmas Eve delivering

ham and turkey to residents of the Capital City.

They were warmly received and the assistance much appreciated. Some folks we spoke to went as far as saying that they probably would not have seen Christmas this year were it not for the Honorable John Saldivar.

And, if all that was not enough, the residents of the Capital City, particularly the folks in the outlying community of San Martin, had one last treat for the season as they took out the extended Christmas weekend with a bram on Tuesday night inside the San Martin Family Park.

Saldivar had brought in a popular Mexi-

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Christmas Big in Belmopan !

Mucho Turkey, Ham and Bram



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can Box (Magic Sounds), psychedelic lights and all, to create the mood for a festive community bram. The park was packed to capacity and the grounds filled with dancing men, women and children, as entire families came out to enjoy the moment. Juice and water were free; other beverages no more than a dollar.

Saldivar, his wife and members of his committee mingled, joked and conversed with residents who had converged on

the park from all parts of the city, particularly the outlying communities. Also dropping in were Mayor Lopez, as well as current and aspiring city councilors. Even San Ignacio Mayor John August found his way to San Martin and joined in the celebration.

The event was the culmination of a series of neighborhood socials thrown in various parts of the Capital City leading up to and into the Christmas holidays.

Christmas 2011 was indeed big in Belmopan. Mucho turkey, ham and bram!



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Reasons

TO BE THANKFUL FOR THE PAST YEAR

AND TO BE HOPEFUL IN THE NEW YEAR

1. Belize Economy recovering well; over 3 percent growth in 2011; IMF acknowledges, "Belize is weathering the financial crisis relatively well when compared with CARICOM peers."

2. Essential Utilities (light, water and telecom) nationalized; public ownership enshrined in Belize Constitution.

3. Crop Quality dramatically improved in Sugar industry after GOB provides \$10 Million bailout, secures waiver secured from debtors, and forges memorandum of understanding, safeguarding livelihood of over 6,000 farmers and their families.

4. Corozal Commercial Free Zone recording 23 percent increase in sales after GOB intervened to avert foreign exchange crisis; hundreds of jobs also saved.

5. Funds Secured for New Macal River Crossing in San Ignacio and connecting circuit from Santa Elena to Benque Viejo Road (\$50 Million Project commencing in 2012).

6. BTL introduces \$49 dollars per month Internet, GST removed (competing providers forced to reduced their rates). 10-10-1999 calls reduced by 25 percent to United States, Central America, Caribbean and China.

7. BTL invests over 60 Million to upgrade service in remote areas; company's profits up and handsome dividends paid to local shareholders.

8. Electricity Rates going down (BEL, now owned by Government, applies to PUC for rate review).

9. BEL providing electrification to 44 rural and peri-urban communities; 2,000 new households serviced in outlying areas of Belmopan, Benque, Succotz and Cayo South; Hattieville and Rockstone Pond (Belzie District); in Orange Walk and

Corozal; in Dangriga Town at Rivas Estate and Wagirale; and in villages of Stann Creek West; Toledo East and West.

10. European Union (EU) funds used for Electrification of villages in Banana Belt; Maya Mopan; Santa Cruz, Monkey River.

11. All affected homes repaired or rebuilt countrywide after Hurricane Richard.

12. Famers rebound from Hurricane and flooding disasters with assistance from Ministry of Agriculture and friendly countries like Venezuela and Taiwan.

13. No major storm in 2011, except freak storm affecting bananas; assistance provided by government.

14. Venezuelan funds (\$20 Million) recovered, used to repair and build homes; GOB working with Mexico for new low-cost housing program similar to Venezuelan; GOB in the meantime spending \$5 Million of its own money for home-repairs and improvement;

15. More than 9,200 Housing Loans (\$62.6 Million) written off.

16. PM announces that Government will also purchase and write off \$17 Million in mortgages from Belize Social Security Board, benefitting 780 Belizeans families (all mortgages of \$50 thousand or less).

17. DFC re-started; providing loans to students and small business at very low interest (8 percent); Receives additional BZ \$6 Million from CDF (Caricom Development Fund); Government considering converted DFC into full-scale national commercial bank.

18. Partial Scope Agreement allows Belizean exports to Guatemala; similar agreement with Mexico being negotiated (consultation meeting held in Corozal); shrimp already being exported to Mexico.

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19. \$300 Subsidy for First and Second Form students countrywide; automatically awarded to those in Stann Creek and Toledo; scholarships increased at all levels; Improved performance in PSE (Primary) and External Exams (Secondary).

20. New concrete buildings at Georgetown Technical High (Stann Creek District) to replace thatched-roof structures; First graduation held for over 50 students (attended by Education Minister Patrick Faber and Area Rep. Melvin Hulse).

21. New buildings at Mopan Technical High, Lady of Guadeloupe, St. Ignatius High, Independence Sixth Form; Holy Ghost (Stann Creek); new High School at Corozon Creek; Ground broken for new School Building in Sunday Wood, Toledo; new primary and secondary school buildings countrywide, such as Hope Creek (Stann Creek); Santiago Layout School (San Ignacio); Roaring Creek Nazarene, Armenia and St Margaret's (Cayo South); Patchakan RC (Corozal North) and other schools renovated; new computer labs at several schools, like Stann Creek Ecumenical High and Independence Primary; New building for Stann Creek Ecumenical Sixth Form; New building for Placencia Anglican Pre-school. Lynam re-opened (ANRI); Old Technical College restored.

22. ITVETs extended countrywide; UB expanded; Teacher-Training increased.

23. Educational and Economic Second Chance opportunities expanded; Monies approved for recurrent expenses for Magazine Road 'Second Chance' Project under Ministry of Education.

24. Belize Mexico Sign New Educational and Cultural Cooperation Program 2010-1013

25. Paving of Placencia Road completed; Last 9 miles of Southern Highway paved

(Golden Stream to Big Falls) to complete project started by last UDP administration; Hopkins Road to be being paved to complete loop with Sittee River Access Road;

26. New Two-Lane Bridge at Middlesex completed; New Kendall Bridge under construction; Mullins River put to tender; New Havana Creek Bridge being built in Dangriga; New Bridge to be built across Haulover in Belize City; and Four Lane Highway up to Burrell Boom.

27. Project underway to upgrade and pave highway from Big Falls (the Dump) to Belize Guatemala Border just south of Jalacte (23 Miles of road); funded by OPEC, CABEL and GOB.

28. Paving of Road form Orange Walk Town to Blue Cree Village.

29. Belize gets over \$62 Million for Rural Development and Sugar. Other EU projects which commenced in January 2011 include Accompanying Measures for Sugar Phase Two, LOT A, Orange Walk to San Lazaro (8.3 Miles) being paved at \$8.6 Million; and Phase Lot C, Patchakan to Xaibe, Calcutta to Xaibe and San Roque to Xaibe (5.5 Miles for \$4.1 Million).

30. Albert and Regent Streets repaved; other streets upgraded and paved; Belize City Urban Rejuvenation Project provides hundreds of jobs; Lining of Collet Canal from Yabra to Conch Shell Bay; Paving of full length of C.A Boulevard; Paving of Neal's Pen Road; Ben Bow Street; Amara Avenue; Jane Usher Boulevard; all part of South-side Poverty Alleviation Project Phase II; CISCO-pioneered initiative on Bishop Street moves to Ferrel's Land and South Street upgrading to cement-paved standard;

31. IDB Loan for drainage in North-side Belize City just signed, to affect Belama, Lizar-raga, and some streets in Caribbean Shores.

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32. GOB launches \$30 Million Poverty Alleviation Project in Belize City (Ministry of Economic Dev in conjunction with CDB) to upgrade Infrastructure and provide jobs. (On top of OPEC \$4.2 Million for Southside Belize Housing Component). 300 persons being employed (additional to the 486 persons already employed through CYDP).

33. More than \$12 million on small business and countrywide poverty alleviation projects via the Social Investment Fund.

34. \$350 Thousand Grant to small farmers for relief from Hurricane Richard; 4 Million from DFC made available to them; Taiwan assists rice production in Toledo.

35. Belize now self-sufficient in grains, surplus exported to Jamaica and Central America.

36. Over 25 farmers from Orange Walk and Corozal Farmers get training in Tilapia Production (assisted by Technical Mission from Taiwan); Hon. Rene Montero Montero distributed 3,500 tilapia fingerlings in Cayo.

37. Municipal Infrastructure Projects in district towns funded by World Bank; GOB finds money to repair streets and roads countrywide after rainy season; Roads and Highways improved and rehabilitated countrywide, with new culverts installed at many locations to improve drainage; New bridges at Mexico Creek, Maypen and Rancho Dolores in Belize District; new bridges at San Antonio/Cristo Rey, Santa Familia, Billy White, Macal Low-level Crossing, and Roaring River (Arizona) in Cayo; Repaving of Main Street in Bullet Tree Village.

38. Crooked Tree gets water system; Burrell Boom water system upgraded, projects underway to provide potable water to 9 villages in Belize River Valley; another project provides water system for villages

along the Old Northern Highway; Cotton Tree, St. Matthews and Frank's Eddy connected to Belmopan Water System; New and Upgraded Water Systems in Maya Center; Hope Creek, Hopkins, Seine Bight, Independence, Sittee River, Sarawee, Placencia, Monkey River, Mullins River (Stann Creek); New water Systems built in San Luis (Orange Walk North) and other villages up North and countrywide; San Pedro and Caye Caulker Water System (IDB project).

39. Marion Jones Stadium being upgraded; Civic Center being re-constructed by Mexican Government (\$15 Million Project);

40. Ministry of Sports intervenes to restore democracy in Football Federation of Belize through agreement forged with FIFA; Hon. John Saldivar becomes first Belize Sports Minister to be elected Vice-President of the Americas Sports Council (in Brazil);

41. Major upgrade of Norman Broaster Stadium in Cayo and Peoples' Stadium in Orange Walk; New sports facilities built in all parts of the country, for example new football field in Red Bank (Stann Creek) and Santa Elena (Cayo); upgrading and lighting of existing facilities such as Cotton Tree and Armenia Football Fields.

42. New Farmers' Markets in Cayo, Belize City and Independence; state-of-the-art Slaughter House in Belize River Valley; Belmopan will get new market (EU funds) in addition to World Bank funded municipal infrastructure project.

43. San Antonio Women's Group Chicken Slaughtering Facility inaugurated under Project of Poultry Rearing" for income generating in Cayo District.

44. New Poly-clinic in Cayo; Western Regional Hospital (Belmopan) refurbished and upgraded; Corozal Hospital Upgraded

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with Lab and Operating Theatre; Toledo Hospital getting upgraded (new \$300 Thousand Maternity Annex); new Clinic and Ambulance in Benque Viejo; new clinics and refurbished hospitals countrywide; affordable Dialysis through WORTH (Hemo-dialysis Unit established at KMH); Free medical treatment in Venezuela (Mission Miracle).

45. NEMO made effective; new warehouses countrywide to stock up on relief supplies; Met Office gets new Doppler radar.

46. Public Transportation better regulated; Independence (Stann Creek) becomes the first village to get a full-scale bus terminal.

47. IDB funds Tourism Infrastructure, Solid Waste and Land Management projects.

48. Belize's first ICT Centre built and established with funding from Taiwan.

49. Petroleum Resources now unequivocally and constitutionally owned by Government and People of Belize.

50. Recall Mechanism empowers voters to recall failed Area Representatives before General Elections; Public Confidence in Government restored; Belize regains the trust of Bi-lateral and Multi-lateral partners.

51. Operation Restore Belize launched to restore social values, public safety and national pride.

52. Survey and subdivision of 3,884 residential and agricultural lots countrywide; all registered surveyors now contracted to survey over 4,709 acres identified by the Ministry of Lands for the allocation of building lots to first time landowners; includes 1,000 Acres on Western Highway for Belize and Cayo Districts; 1,000 in Orange Walk District; purchase price for first time land owner reduced to less than \$1,000 and immediate freehold title clear title obtained

upon payment of first installment; Over 3,000 House lots and farmland issued out in villages throughout Stann Creek West; most recently in Maya Mopan, San Roman; Santa Rosa and Red Bank; Many more thousands already issued throughout the country.

53. New Office Building for Natural Resources opened in Cohn Walk Area; \$ 5 Million being spent on new Land Management System.

54. New rural Fire Stations built in villages such as Pomona Village (Stann Creek and Ladyville (Belize District).

55. Murder rate down in Belize City thanks to Gang Truce; Jobs created through BELTRAIDE Training; Youth for the Future launches Southside Youth Success Project.

56. Streets paved in Belmopan; lines and safety features put in through SIF Project.

57. Venezuela donates farming machinery (tractor, grader, beans thrasher) and a new water system to Ministry of Agriculture Central Farm Station through a grant from the ALBA fund.

58. Solid Waste Management underway

59. Painting of Haulover; flags lining the northern Highway into Belize City. Colored lights; welcoming palms newly planted.

60. Tourism on the rebound. 6.7% increase in second quarter overnight visitors; 16 percent jump in April Alone; for the first half of the year, hotel revenues rose by 17.8 percent; Overnight Tourism up by 3.3 % for the entire year (2011

61. Improvement of Northern Road Network to paving standards (OW Town to Progresso; OW to Blue Creek; and between San Lazaro and August Pine Ridge to start.

62. IDB Funded Sustainable Tour-

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TO BE THANKFUL FOR THE PAST YEAR AND TO BE HOPEFUL IN THE NEW YEAR

ism Project (ground has been broken in San Ignacio for the new welcome center)

63. More than 5,000 persons benefitting from Food Pantry; enrolling another 7,000 in San Ignacio/Santa Elena and Benque Viejo.

64. Operation BOOST is providing monthly cash transfers to 4,300 persons.

65. Child Subsidy for Working and Single Mothers coming on stream.

66. Apprenticeship Program enrolling over over 1,500 students in special classes countrywide (from St Peter Clever in the South to Corozal Community College in the North)

67. DNA Lab; refurbishment of National Forensic Science Service Building; Foreign Expert to be paid to train locals; new Scenes of Crime Vehicle; new legislation drafted to accept DNA evidence in Court;

68. Police get Three new mobile interdiction units (two in the north and one in the south);

69. New 911 call center to handle 70 calls simultaneously; new Crime Information Management System; electronic finger-printing machines already being installed in each district (to store and match fingerprints of suspects).

70. BELTRAIDE (Belize Trade and Investment Development Service) receives grant from Caribbean Aid for Trade and Regional Integration Trust Fund (CART-fund) administered by CDB (Financed by UK Dept of International Development) to develop a national Export Strategy.

71. Fiscal Incentive Program being developed through BELTRAIDE to suit small and medium enterprises.

72. BELTRAIDE, in Conjunction with Regional Centre for Promotion of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise (CEN-PROMYPE) and Guatemalan Ministry of

Economy, launches "Inclusive Linkages Project" (funded by Austrian Cooperation) to "incorporate Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Belize-Guatemala border region into established production chains".

73. Taiwan donates 200 thousand for "Inspiration Center Project" under office of Special Envoy for Woman and Children, Kim Simplis Barrow (aimed at providing services for Belizean population living with disabilities

74. A Grant of \$6 Million from Japan Social Development Fund (through World Bank) to improve Health and Nutrition of Children in the South (Toledo)

75. Airports extended and upgraded countrywide.

76. Construction started on New Office Building for Civil Aviation Building at International Airport (with VIP area in partnership with Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (BZ1.35 Million); "Modernization of Voice Communication" System for the Belize Air Traffic Services in Department of Civil Aviation.

77. New Website for Department of Civil Aviation launched outlining responsibilities of the department and facilitating online completion and downloading of forms and applications.

78. Higher Quality Healthcare- Innovative Electronic Record for Every Belizean.

79. Onion Producers and Ministry of Agriculture agree on quota system, and three planting seasons for farmers to cultivate 57 acres in Corozal, 26 Acres in Orang Walk and 8 Acres in Belize District.

80. BAHA Receives 10 new Pick-up Trucks through IDB Loan US 500 Million to improve Agricultural Services to support production and export of agricultural products from Belize

101

Reasons

TO BE THANKFUL FOR THE PAST YEAR

AND TO BE HOPEFUL IN THE NEW YEAR

81. Belize Signs UN Convention on Rights of Persons with disabilities. (148th signatory). Signing on Belize's behalf, First Lady Mrs. Kim Simplis Barrow

82. Ministry of Agriculture receives \$100 Thousand worth of equipment from Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) through technical cooperation program, to strengthen the National Extension Service.

83. Santa Elena (Cayo) gets brand New Post Office.

84. Community Centers and multi-purpose buildings built or refurbished countrywide, such as Pomona (Stann Creek Valley), Maskall and St. Ann's (Belize Rural).

85. Belize Dental Department enhances dental services to rural area of Central Region through contribution by Western Kentucky University.

86. Free Butane delivered to residents in Cayo and Belmopan Areas through BNE.

87. Ministry of Health receives BZ\$200 Thousand for the Ministry's Child Survival, Education and Development Program, especially in recovery from Hurricane Richard.

88. 200 Acer Desk Top Computers with flat screen monitors handed over to ITVET Institution countrywide by Patrick Fabre and Taiwan Ambassador David WU (Donated by Taiwan Government through Ministry of Education as part of a Restore Belize Project).

89. Computers presented to St Hilda's Primary Anglican School by Rene Montero.

90. GST and Import duty removed from on a wide range of items keeping inflation at a minimum (Nil in 2010, less than 2 percent in 2011).

91. Western Paradise- a new village born at Mile 8 on Western Highway.

92. Belize National Coastguard establishes \$3 Million Operational Base at Calabash Caye to police Belize's territorial water.

93. Hon. Rene Montero issues 101 house lots issued to youths in Cayo Central (their own 101 reasons to be thankful and hopeful)

94. Fisheries Act revised for better protection management of marine resources.

95. New vehicles (double cab pickups) handed over by Minister of Agriculture to BAHA, CGA/Citrus Research Education Institute and to the Regional Organization for Plant and Animal Health (worth \$700 Thousand), obtained from OIRSA Mexico to implement Citrus Greening work plan.

96. Ministry of Agriculture launches Project Execution Unit (PEU) and National Coordinating Committee for Agriculture Research and Development (NCCARD) to fulfill national goals of Food Security.

97. Clean Energy project launched through \$10 Million grant from Japan (Photovoltaic electricity generation system in Belmopan to convert solar energy to electrical power to be sold to national electrical grid system.

98. Productive Sector doing well: Construction Up by 7.4%; Fishing up by 14.5 %; Citrus revenues up.

99. Contract for design and build component of the Solid Waste Management Project signed; 14 Million to be spent between January and July in Caye Caulker, San Pedro, San Ignacio and Belize City.

100. Millions more to be spent in the new year on home improvement and repairs across the nation.

101. 'Turning the Corner' Business Forum held; Business Development Facilitator being appointed in the Office of the Prime Minister to oversee the new relationship with the Private Sector.

Mensaje de Año Nuevo del Primer Ministro

Ni ng ú n saldo en ninguno de los incrementos anuales por medio el cual medimos el pasar del tiempo, está realmente completo sin sufrimientos y tribulaciones. Es por ello que como seres humanos, sociedades, y naciones, siempre damos la bienvenida al año nuevo con expectativas y alegría. Es una oportunidad para recuperarse de la adversidad de los doce meses anteriores, para obrar mejor y ser mejor. El eterno ritual de despedir el viejo y dar la bienvenida al nuevo, es por lo tanto emblemático de la eterna capacidad de esperanza y renovación. Y esto, a cambio, es parte del legado de Dios a la raza humana; a todas las criaturas racionales que creen en El.

Aunque el año pasado, como todos, no estuvo sin dificultades, estas fueron pequeñas. De hecho, en vista de la situación global; dado los continuos problemas fiscales, de deudas y desempleo de los Estados Unidos; dada la crisis absoluta en la que Europa se ve sumida; nuestro país hizo bien económicamente. Y un vistazo a los números sirve para confirmar que, en todas las circunstancias, hay un logro del cual agradecidos estamos.

El Instituto de Estadísticas de Belice, informa que los primeros nueve meses del año, nuestra economía creció un dos punto



*Hon. Dean Barrow
Primer Ministro de Belize*

siete por ciento (2.7%), comparado con el uno punto ocho por ciento (1.8%) para el mismo período en el dos mil diez. El crecimiento en el último trimestre del año es tradicionalmente el más robusto, así que estamos bien encaminados a, tal y como lo predije en el Día de la Independencia, exceder el tres por ciento (3%) del producto interno nacional en el dos mil once. Esto es un gran logro, y estará casi un punto porcentual por encima del crecimiento de dos punto cuatro por ciento (2.4%) del año pasado.

Cuando examinamos los sectores particulares que son los más responsables por este panorama de avance económico, el futuro es aún más prometedor. Hasta septiembre fue el Sector Comercial de mayoreo y menudeo que llevaba la delantera, registrando un aumento

del siete punto siete por ciento (7.7%). Tan solo la Zona Libre de Corozal fue responsable por una recuperación comercial de veinte y tres por ciento (23%), en ventas anuales. A lo largo de los tres trimestres, Hoteles y Restaurantes crecieron un dos punto uno por ciento (2.1%), como resultado del aumento de las llegadas turísticas en un tres punto tres por ciento (3.3%); Transporte y Comunicaciones creció un dos punto cinco por ciento (2.5%). La construcción también tuvo un siete punto cuatro por ciento de mejoría (7.4%). Pero fue la industria de la Pesca que realmente estuvo a la cabeza con un aumento del catorce punto cinco por ciento (14.5%). Y, mientras la producción de azúcar cayó en general, las proporciones, la calidad y los precios mejoraron, proveyendo una posición ideal para una

exitosa y abundante zafra. Finalmente, la inflación permaneció baja, solo con dos puntos porcentuales.

Es en base a todo lo antedicho que puedo acertar que fuimos bendecidos en el dos mil once. Fácilmente sobrepasamos al dos mil diez y, si se compara con el dos mil nueve, el logro es aun más notable, ya que, recordemos, en ese año hubo una contracción y fue cuando las olas de la recesión mundial amenazaban con inundarnos por completo.

El éxito económico del dos mil once se debe a que los aumentos en entradas por exportación, incluyendo en particular las provenientes del petróleo, hicieron posible que el Gobierno diera un gigantesco paso hacia la consolidación de su agenda social. Fueron implementados proyectos de infra-estructura para crear empleos; fueron expandidas las oportunidades educativas y económicas para aquellos necesitados de una segunda oportunidad; y con el viento en popa, a pasos agigantados avanzamos con los préstamos y concesiones para las mejoras de viviendas, las cestas básicas para las personas de bajos ingresos, y los programas de transferencia monetaria también para los más necesitados.

La flor de nuestra democracia también retoño. Mantuvimos nuestro compromiso de ser un gobierno accesible, transparente y responsable; y continuamos nuestra marcha hacia el verdadero nacionalismo mediante la estipulación con-

Mensaje de Año Nuevo del Primer Ministro

stitucional de ser dueños de los servicios esenciales.

Quizá lo más notable de todo, es que desde septiembre, cuando forjamos un cese de hostilidades entre las pandillas de la ciudad de Belice, hemos tenido éxito en reducir la incidencia de asesinatos en este país. La significativa reducción en la tasa de homicidios para los últimos cuatro meses del dos mil once, comparados con el dos mil diez, representa un gran logro. Y llega en el punto justo y preciso, cuando muchos comenzaban a sentir que no habría rescate de tal abismo.

Pero el verdadero propósito de este Mensaje, es mirar hacia adelante; asegurar a todos que la promesa inherente y la oportunidad del Año Nuevo es una verdadera realidad. Los esfuerzos se redoblarán, los compromisos se expandirán, y los logros serán más intensos.

En el dos mil doce, por ejemplo, el empuje en las infra-estructuras y los empleos que conlleva alcanzará nuevas metas. En el sur, la carretera a Jalacté, en el norte, la carretera de Blue Creek, en el oeste, el Cruce del Río Macal, en la ciudad de Belice, los proyectos de drenaje y de calles; todos estarán en plena acción.

El nuevo estadio de Marion Jones ya saldrá de la fase de fundación, y el Nuevo Centro Cívico saldrá de las ruinas. Se ha firmado el contrato para el diseño y la construcción del 'Proyecto de Manejo de Desperdicios Sólidos'; y se invertirán 14 (catorce) millones

de dólares entre enero y julio en Caye Caulker, San Pedro, San Ignacio y Ciudad Belice. El Banco Mundial nos asegura que, el ya demorado proyecto de rehabilitación y embellecimiento para los municipios en los distritos, comenzará en abril.

Una contribución monetaria para las madres trabajadoras, a nivel nacional, se unirá a los programas de aprendices, la cesta básica, y BOOST. Y los centros de ayuda para los vecindarios necesitados de la ciudad de Belice asistirán con el desarrollo comunitario, recuperación social, y la prevención de violencia.

Millones de dólares continuarán financiando las mejoras y reparaciones de viviendas en todo el país; y cada topógrafo registrado en este país ha sido contratado para trabajar en la sub-división de cuatro mil setecientos nueve acres identificados por el Ministerio de Terrenos para ser asignados como lotes de viviendas para aquellos que no tienen ni han sido dueños.

Nuestra asistencia hacia los pobres y los de clase media continúa. Ellos, de hecho todos los Beliceños, serán asistidos por la reducción en los precios de electricidad que prometí en Septiembre y que ahora se hace realidad. BEL, al fin del pueblo y gobierno, ya ha aceptado, a través de sus gestas a la Comisión de Utilidades Públicas, que los precios de la electricidad tienen que reducirse. Y la Comisión pueda que también reduzca aún más lo que habría propuesto

BEL. La decisión final será el 31 de enero, y las nuevas tarifas reducidas deben, bajo la ley actual, tomar efecto unos cuantos meses después. Pero somos un gobierno que estamos apurados en hacer cosas buenas. Y el alivio al consumidor, la reducción en el costo de la vida, el alivio a los comercios, y la industria y la agricultura, no pueden esperar. Por lo tanto, el Gobierno enmendará la ley para implementar desde el mismo día siguiente, el primero de Febrero, dos mil doce, esta histórica reducción en lo que los Beliceños pagan por electricidad.

Pero todavía hay más que estamos ofreciendo para alegrar esta temporada. Al contrario del dos mil doce, nuestra visión de adelanto, oportunidad e igualdad no es algo nuevo. Pero los frescos comienzos que siempre toman lugar el primero de enero, proveen una apropiada oportunidad para que enfatizamos nuestro credo: que la llama de justicia social de este gobierno nunca se apagará; que arderá aún más en los próximos doce meses.

Y nuestra preocupación por los marginados, por aquellos con sueldos fijos, bajos ingresos o sin ingresos, ha causado que tengamos otra nueva idea para el alivio y asistencia de año nuevo. Por lo tanto, hoy anuncio que el Gobierno comprará todas las hipotecas de cincuenta mil dólares y menos, del Seguro Social de Belice. Estas llegan a un total de setecientos ochenta y cuentan con un total de valor agregado de diez y

siete millones de dólares. Poco después el Gobierno anulará estas hipotecas, cancelando todas las obligaciones de préstamo de las cabezas de familia y dejando ese dinero a su disposición para invertirlo en la economía y generar más actividad.

La intención de ayudar no solo a individuos sino a los comercios en esta forma, me trae al último punto que deseo hacer. En todo lo que hacemos, el Gobierno no se puede olvidar del sector privado. Se necesita una participación equitativa, e hicimos un buen comienzo al final del dos mil once. Esto debe consolidarse en este año venidero. Por lo tanto, el gobierno entre otras cosas, está nombrando un Facilitador de Desarrollo Comercial en la Oficina del Primer Ministro para supervisar dicha nueva relación.

Finalizo haciendo referencia una vez más al renacimiento del optimismo que es la provincia especial de las celebraciones de año nuevo. A través del mundo, esta es una ocasión para reencender la inspiración.

Es el re-inicio anual de la búsqueda del progreso humano, de la misión alquimista de convertir hasta el cobre en oro. En el caso de Belice, nuestra resolución es re-dedicar y re-consagrar la cruzada por el cual construimos una nación brillante, justa y equitativa. Una que será la envidia de y el modelo para región y el mundo.

Feliz año Nuevo a todos, y que Dios bendiga a Belice.

Better Than Expected!

Economy Grows By over 3 percent in 2011

Continued from Page 1

went up by 2.5%. Construction was also 7.4% better. But it was Fishing that led all comers with a 14.5% hike. And while overall sugar production fell, ratios, quality and prices improved so that we are now poised for an outstanding new season. Finally, Inflation remained low at just over 2%.”

The low inflation rate is, of course, attributed directly to the government’s pro-poor policies, part and parcel of which is the removal of taxes, GST and Import Duty, from a wide range of commodities that the average man and woman depend on for basic survival.

Belize’s better than expected GDP growth in the year ending, compares favorably with that of other nations in the Caribbean, not the least among which is Cuba. Cuba had projected a GDP growth of 2.9%, but fell short of that, ending the year with only 2.7 percent growth. Belize on the contrary, as the PM noted, has exceeded the 3 percent growth he had forecasted in his Independence Day address.

“It is on the basis of all this that I can say that we were blessed in 2011. We easily out-paced 2010, and the story is even more remarkable if we go back to 2009. Then, we all remember, was when there was actual contraction; when the fallout from the world recession threatened to swamp us completely,” the PM remarks.

The economic news is certainly more than encouraging, but as we acknowledged, man shall not live by bread alone; but on one other specific front where we have, in a sense, been fighting for the very soul of the nation, the end-of-year statistics seem to suggest that, indeed, redemption draweth nigh.

“Perhaps most noteworthy of all, we succeeded—certainly since Septem-

ber when we forged the Belize City gang truce—in decelerating the incidence of senseless murders in this country.

The significant reduction in the homicide rate for the last four months of 2011, as compared to 2010, is great progress. And it comes at just the right point, when too many were be-

ginning to feel that there could be no rescue from the abyss.”

Turning to the year ahead, 2012, the Prime Minister outlined a number of initiatives and projects that should ensure that the inherent promise and opportunity of the New Year will not be forgone, and that the efforts which be-

gan to yield positive results in 2010, are strengthened, that the commitments, and that the successes are deepened.

“In 2012, as one example, the infrastructure drive—and the jobs it brings—will scale new heights. The Jalacte Road in the South, the Blue Creek one in the North, the Macal

Continued on Page 17

Happy New Year

To all residents of Belmopan

As this year closes and the New Year approaches we give thanks for the many Blessings bestowed. We are ever hopeful that the New Year will overflow with good tidings and prosperity. May we approach every challenge with that spirit of Unity and Brotherhood which will see us conquer all.



**From Mayor Simeon Lopez
The Councillors and Staff of
The Belmopan City Council**

Better Than Expected!

Economy Grows By over 3 percent in 2011

Continued from Page 16

River Crossing in the West, the comprehensive Belize City drainage and street works, will all be hitting full stride.

The new Marion Jones stadium will be coming out of the ground, the new Civic Center will be rising from the rubble. The contract for the design and build component of the Solid Waste Management Project, has also been signed; and it will see 14 million dollars spent between January and July in Caye Caulker, San Pedro, San Ignacio and Belize City. And their delayed rehabilitation and beautification drive for the District Towns will now start by April, the World Bank assures us."

But, if man shall not live by bread alone, neither does infrastructure alone build a nation. And in terms of this government's investment in people through its pro-poor programs, the PM noted that those as well will be strengthened, broadened and deepened.

"A countrywide money contribution for working mothers will join the apprenticeship, food subsidy and BOOST programs. And the drop-in centers in distressed Belize City neighborhoods will help with community development, social recovery and violence prevention.

Millions of dollars will continue to fund Government's home improvement and home repairs across the nation; and every single registered surveyor in this country has now been contracted to work on the subdivision of the 4,709 acres identified by the Ministry of Lands for the allocation of building lots to first time landowners."

As part of his government's continued commitment and outreach to the poor and middle class, the PM noted that electricity rates are expected to go down in the new year as BEL, now controlled by the government, has already applied to the PUC for a review and reduction. And he said the government is well on course

with its plans to issue thousands of new residential and agricultural lots to Belizeans who do not yet own a piece of land, all the licensed surveyors in the country having been hired to survey as much as 4,709 acres of land identified.

And he broke the good news that in addition to the 9,200 (\$62.6 Million) government housing loans already forgiven, his administration intends, in the new year, to purchase from Social Security all mortgages worth 50 thousand or less and to write those off as well. That, he noted will benefit another 780 Belizean families who will have at their disposal some extra money to spend in the economy.

The Prime Minister had one final exciting announcement, this one specifically and directly to the business sector. It is that the government intends for the new year to, among other things, appoint a Business Development Facilitator in the Office of the Prime Minister to help oversee the new relationship forged with that sector at the recently held business forum titled 'Turning the Corner'.

And with that, the PM proceeded to deliver his closing words of inspiration as Belizeans prepare to bid the Old Year farewell, and turn a new leaf onto the New Year, 2012:

"I close by referring once again to the rebirth of optimism that is the special province of New Year celebrations. All across the globe, this is an occasion for the rekindling of inspiration. It is the annual re-start of the quest for human progress, of the alchemist mission to turn even brass into gold. In the case of Belize, our resolution is to re-dedicate and re-consecrate the crusade by which we build a shining, fair and just country. One that will be the envy of, and model for, the region and the world.

Happy New Year everyone, and God bless Belize.

Mensaje Navideño del Vice Primer Ministro



*Hon. Gaspar Vega
Deputy Prime Minister*

En esta temporada navideña primeramente quiero dar las gracias a Dios por darnos otra oportunidad de compartir con todos nuestros seres queridos otra navidad en paz y con esperanza.

Quiero tomar esta oportunidad para desear a toda persona en Belice felices pascuas.

Que nuestro divino creador les colme de mucha felicidad.

El año en curso ha sido un año lleno de fenómenos naturales, retos económicos y de conmociones políticas atreves de todo el Mundo.

Es por eso que en tiempos como este debemos reflexionar en las necesidades de todos nuestros prójimos, en particular en nuestro

querido Belice. Cuando contemplamos los pesares que nos agobian es posible sentir una ligera sensación de angustia.

Pero no debemos perder la esperanza. La Navidad siempre nos trae esperanza, como lo hizo hace dos mil años atrás cuando nació Nuestro Salvador.

Quiero tomar esta oportunidad para nuevamente asegurarnos que su gobierno del Partido Unido Democrático continuara gobernando la Nación con la misma Firmeza, con Justicia y con el mismo Respeto que ha llegado a ser la estampa de nuestra administración. Jamás perderemos la compasión para nuestro pueblo.

Tomo esta oportunidad para desearles de parte de nuestro gobierno, de mi familia y de mi propio, una feliz navidad para usted y para toda su familia.

Mis sinceros deseos es que esta navidad y el año venidero estén llenos de alegría, esperanza y prosperidad.

Que Dios nos bendiga a todos y nos mantenga en paz y armonía

FELIZ NAVIDAD Y UN PROSPERO AÑO NUEVO!

Sports Update

-With Ismael "Miley" Garcia



*Ismael "Miley" Garcia
National Sports Coordinator
Ministry of Sports*

As the year closes we at the Ministry of Sports reflect on the year in sports and rededicate ourselves to continue to provide the highest level of support to all disciplines within our limited resources.

It has been an exciting year for us as we saw delegations of basketball, softball, track and field, football, cycling, cricket, and other disciplines, represent our country Belize on the international scene. We have done our best, with the assistance of Central Government, to support these endeavours financially, albeit not at the level needed. The commitment of the Minister of Sports, Honorable John Saldivar, nonetheless, has been demonstrably clear in his efforts to support as many Associations and Federations in making possible their participation in these international commitments.

Once again we look forward to all National

Associations/Federations submitting their calendar of events for 2012 so that we can do some forward planning in acquiring and distributing these resources. Similarly, we remind and encourage all Associations/Federations that, along with this activity, in the month of January, they need to submit their applications for registration to the National Sports Council as mandated by the SPORTS ACT. Associations/Federations that are not registered with the National Sports Council do not qualify for financial assistance or use of the facilities under the auspices of the Council.

We would like to remind sporting associations, however, that the most important reason for registering with the National Sports Council is not so much because of financial support that may be provided to them. It is

more important that as a nation we begin to create a national listing of our athletes and teams/clubs with a view to developing our outstanding athletes. The Ministry is committed to developing world class athletes, who can in turn convert their talent into educational and economic benefit, for themselves and their families. Registration helps us to identify, at an early stage, these promising athletes so that they can benefit from the various training programs that are available both locally and abroad.

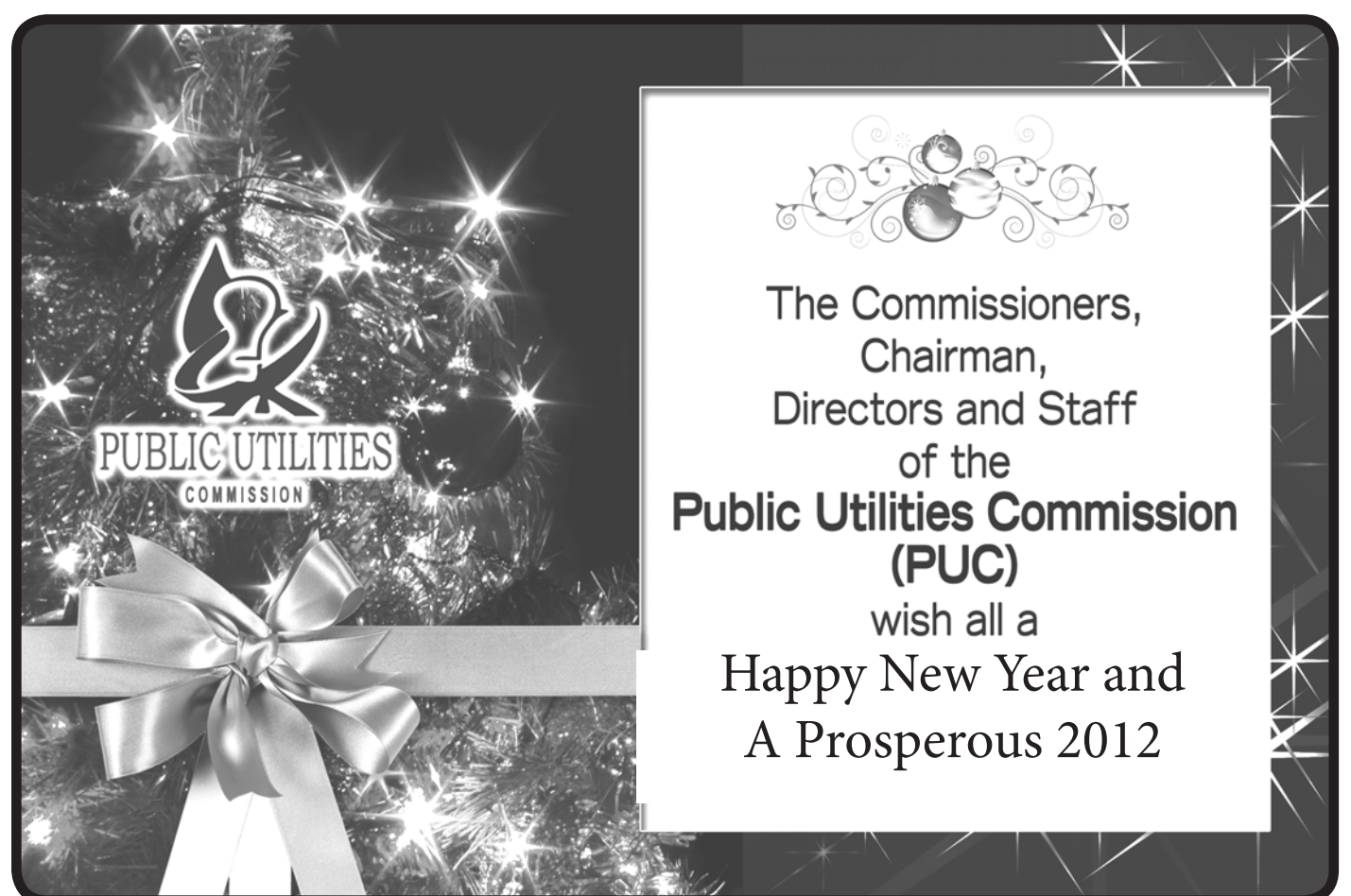
We look forward to two exciting projects that will continue in 2012 that will greatly assist in this endeavour. The first is the completion of the Marion Jones Sporting Complex, which is a work in progress and which will truly be a facility of which we can be proud. The second is the commencement of the

much anticipated refurbishment of the Belize City Center. The Ministry will also continue its efforts to upgrade other sporting facilities countrywide with a view to giving greater opportunity to athletes countrywide. Already we are seeing results from the employment of a Program Development Officer for Basketball, Coach Tarr, at the National Sports Council.

We hope to enlist persons to develop programs in the other disciplines as well, with a view to the long term development of our athletes.

All these things excite us at the Ministry as we forge ahead with our National Goal of converting Belize's raw talent into GOLD!!!!

H A P P Y
NEW YEAR AND ALL
THE BEST TO ALL BE-
LIZEAN ATHLETES
AND TO ALL OUR
MANY READERS!!!!!!



The Commissioners,
Chairman,
Directors and Staff
of the
**Public Utilities Commission
(PUC)**
wish all a
**Happy New Year and
A Prosperous 2012**



Happy New Year
From
The Department of Transport

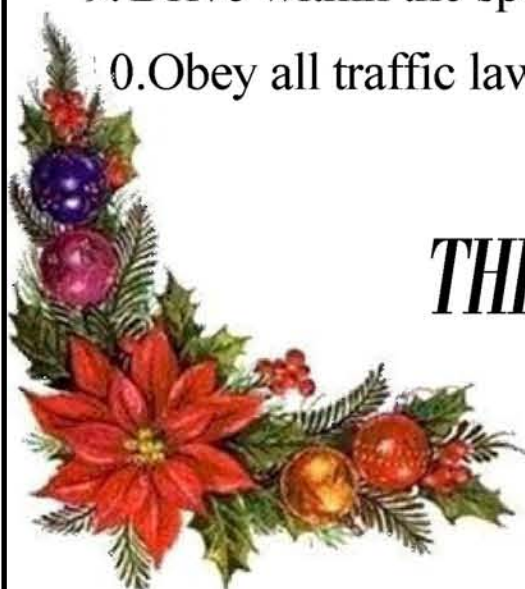


THERE'S A THIN LINE BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH.

TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS FOR DRIVERS

1. Check your motor vehicle to ensure that everything is in good working condition. Example – brakes, all lights, horn, wipers, tires, spare-tire, tire tools, oil, water, brake fluid & dash board gauges.
2. Ensure that your driver's license is valid and that your vehicle is licensed and insured.
3. Wear your seat belts at all times when on the highways. (It is an offence for drivers and front seat passengers not to wear seat belts on the highways).
4. Don't carry passengers in the back of open pickup trucks. (Vehicle only insured to carry amount of passengers as stipulated on certificate of registration/title).
5. Don't drive if you are consuming Alcoholic beverages or taking medication (drugs). Have designated driver (alcohol and drugs affect your vision and judgement).
6. Avoid making calls on cell phone when driving, it is best to pull off to the right to make calls or to answer your cell phone, don't text while driving.
7. Wear your helmet at all times when operating or being carried as a passenger on a motor cycle.
8. Only overtake if you have a clear view of the road ahead, never overtake around blind curves or when driving over a hill.
9. Drive within the speed limit at all times.
10. Obey all traffic laws and signs.

THINK! DON'T DRINK AND DRIVE



Education is the Foundation *and Youths are the Future*

To our Students, Teachers and all Belizeans

HAPPY NEW YEAR

**Let us continue
to invest in the
future and build
our nation
on a strong
foundation**



From Hon. Patrick Faber

*and the capable team at
the Ministry of Education*