

The Independent

Reformer for the People

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Close Call in Lords Bank; UDP squeezes by PUP

Lord's Bank, the sister village to Ladyville in the Belize District, voted in a red council on Sunday, April 15, but just barely. Chairman Andre Rivero just edged out PUP contender, former Belize City Mayor Stephen Latchman, 307 to 284 votes, with twelve spoiled ballots.

The UDP presence was strong on polling day with banners on every utility pole down the Lord's Bank Road off the Northern Highway and United Democratic Party flags waving at the entrance to the community center. Supporters in red t-shirts greeting every elector as they arrived.

The People's United Party was low key in terms of visuals, and stood more on the sidelines.

Besides Rivero, a career civil servant with experience as a social worker, law enforcement officer, traffic department officer, prosecu-



Lords Bank residents line up at the community center to cast their ballot.



UDP Village Councillor-elect Sheldon Williams welcomes Lords Bank voters to the polls on Sunday afternoon.

tor and community rehabilitation officer, the UDP slate includes Paul Garcia Sr., retiree, Roger Garbutt a business machines technician, Walter Sosa, a Bowen and Bowen salesman, Mark Anderson, electrician, Sheldon Williams, salesman and athlete, and youth group member Michelle Williams.

PUP councilor aspirants include Carol Young, Daniel Molina, Raquel Arnold, Agnes Stevens, Edison Parks, Pamela Fitzgibbon.

Election data from around the country was slow to arrive at the Ministry of National Development, at Independent press time on Monday only results for Cayo were in and information had not yet been disseminated to the media.

Inside this Issue

**Peninsula Citizens
protest Illegal
Mining
pg. 3**

**Defining Objectives
pg.6**

**Divide & Conquer
pg. 7**

**OAS & OECD agree
to fight corruption
pg. 8**

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Higher end power users should pay more

Dear Editor,

On April 12th, 2007 Mr. Roberto Young, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission, PUC, appeared on the Channel 5 newscast and invited members of the public to comment on the application submitted by BEL for a rebalance of rates.

I reviewed a 12 page document available on the PUC website (www.puc.bz). The tables and schedules were quite difficult to understand by a lay person such as myself as little in the way of explanatory notes are provided. Nevertheless, I made an attempt and offer the following comments for your consideration.

While the newscast indicated that the proposed charges are supposed to translate to reduced bills for most consumers, based on my understanding of Schedule 4 with respects to residential tariffs (again, without the benefit of explanatory notes), I found that the proposed rates would result in a 3% increase for lower end energy consuming residential costumers and a 2% increase for the higher end consuming residential costumers.

The documents did not indicate what the average consumption of a residential costumer is, but assuming one refrigerator, three 60 watt light bulbs, two floor fans, a 75 watt 19" television, and a radio or other small appliance, and using average energy consumption of these items that I gleaned off the Internet, I estimated this to be somewhere in the neighborhood of 300Kwh. Doing the math, I calculated that the average monthly residential bill for household with these appliances would increase from \$132.00 per month to \$135.50 per month or an increase of 3%.

Meanwhile, residential consumers who have more electrical appliances such as

clothes dryers, air conditioning units, ceiling fans, and who therefore consume more energy will experience a 2% increase in their bill because the increase in proposed tariff is weighted more on the first 50Kwh of consumption (\$0.06 increase) and less on the consumption above 200 Kwh (\$.01 increase).

I encourage you to examine this rate structure and to consider modifying it such that the increase is shifted more towards the higher end users who consume more energy (are less energy efficient) and who can most likely afford an increase, or if they can't afford the increase, or at least have more flexibility in adjusting their rate of consumption by, for example, turning off their air conditioners and using a fan, or unplugging the extra refrigerator or television set.

Please consider a rate structure that will promote more efficient and sustainable energy use among residential consumers by shifting the increase more toward higher end residential consumers and away from basic or lower end consumers. For example, a \$0.02 increase at all levels along with replacement of the \$10 service charge with \$5 flat rate would result in reduced bills for consumers who keep their consumption levels below 200Kwh, 1% increase for consumers who use 300 Kwh per month, and gradually increase up to 4% for residential consumers who use up to 2,500 Kwh per month.

Sincerely,

Mario Lara

Under wraps

Dear Editor,

Why is it that the results of the village council elections are seemingly being horded by the government for days on end and the public has to rely on yeriso from the major political parties? What happened to freedom of information? Ac-

countability and transparency?

During any General Elections, when there are thousands more Belizeans voting, the Elections and Boundaries Department posts the results on their website. Granted they are always far behind media reporters, especially those on radio who get inside information and unofficial results from campaign workers and friends on the "inside," but at least we can find the results after 24 hours or so.

But for village council elections, we are merely told the Ministry of National Development will be posting the results in newspapers, but how long does it take for them to get the numbers anyway?

Perhaps they are trying to hold off as long as possible to prevent anything unflattering to the ruling PUP from emerging and influencing the next round of village voting. Which, raises the next question: why are the elections being staggered? General Elections and Municipal Elections are simultaneous. Do you mean to tell us we do not have enough personnel between the Elections and Boundaries Office and National Development to sustain polling areas in all the villages? That seems so ridiculous. But maybe it's the case. Sad if it is.

And even sadder that the dates of the village council elections are so poorly publicized. Perhaps the Ministry of National Development can do a post mortem after this round and figure out how they can work more closely with the media and perhaps collaborate with Elections and Boundaries. Some of us are not entirely comfortable with other ministries running elections anyway when we have people we trust (or are supposed to trust) being paid very good salaries at Elections and Boundaries and they only have to kick into action every three years or so.

Signed,

A. Martinez

The

INdependent Reformer

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Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development protest illegal mining

Loewen has been mining this sand

from the Lagoon without a permit for at least a week and one resident of the area estimates that at least 150 dump truck loads of sand have been taken to Villas at Coco Plum, owned by Mr. Boris Mansfield, and the

Zeboz development area (Plantation development) in the last week. Further, this is not the first instance of Loewen's illegal sand dredging, similar illegal dredging occurred off the

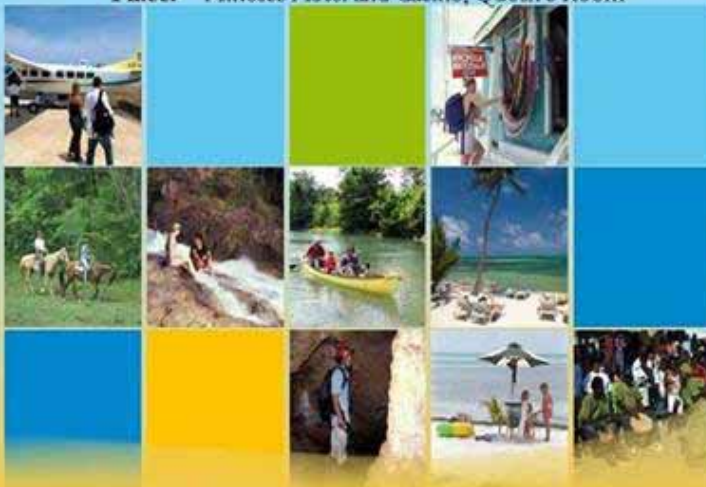
Area residents have repeatedly reported this illegal sand dredging and (Please Turn To Page 13) 

Chief Executive Officer
Ministry of Health, Local Government, Transport and Communications
3rd Floor, East Block Building, Independence Plaza,
Belmopan

The Minister of Tourism, Information and
National Emergency Management,
Hon. Godfrey P. Smith
in conjunction with the
Belize Tourism Board
cordially invites you
to attend ...

**9th Annual Industry
Presentation**

Date: Wednesday, April 25th, 2007
Time: 9:30 a.m. (Seating at 9:00 a.m.)
Place: Princess Hotel and Casino, Queen's Room



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Bearing Fruits



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

I am convinced there is nothing like the first mango of the season. Unless of course it is the first peach, or strawberry, or kiwi, or equally delightful fruit native to some equally delightful and fruitful part of the world.

In Belize, the first sniff, the first peel of the skin, the first bite and first juicy dribble down your chin are nothing short of sensational. You stand there totally focused on what is before you; for a few moments the outer world recedes and the universe is simply delicious. No one, no thing, can upset your equilibrium. You are at one with the world. You no longer feel the humid heat, or hear the deafening boom box next door, the novella or soap on television

holds no interest for you, and emails are to be left unanswered for another time.

Right now, you only have time to eat your mango. Before someone comes and you feel obligated to share. You must hurry, but savor the moment, at the same time.

The only way to top this, your first time of the season, is to eat that mango

the Creator intend for it to be this way? Is it not why (S)He made fruits so desirable the humans and animals in the first place? So that tapirs would cross rivers to get to them and horses would risk being chased off private property and monkeys would sneak up on each other and steal their prize and eat it fur-tively, then pitch away the life-bearing

domino tournaments. Sharing the yard with coconut and breadfruit and guava and lime trees... a good life for a tree.

There is a special place in the Belizean heart for the mango trees; how they love us in return, showering us with basket-fuls of rewards in exchange for doing pretty much nothing to take care of them. We don't even water them, just begin to watch them every April and May, trying to tell if its going to be a "good season" or if that the "cold front no confuse di tree mek he tink da winta still yet..."

No matter our station in life, the color of our skin, sucking on a mango is a pleasure we all look forward to, each and every year. I say all, for have you ever met anyone who ever said, "No thanks, I don't like mangos," as they might say of papaya or craboo or kinap? They might only be particular about the variety, but I certainly have yet to meet a mango hater.

Just think of the generations of people in this part of the world who have watched the trees and waited for fruits to ripe and ready. Or cut them green for chutney or to eat with salt.

(Please Turn To Page 14)

..have you ever met anyone who ever said, "No thanks, I don't like mangos,"

in the water - a river is okay, but the sea is better when a little briny water splashes up on your lips and creates a delectable contrast between sweet and salt.

You toss the skins as far away as possible and then the seed too, watching them drift away gently on the waves. There is no guilt; its not pollution, being biodegradable after all. No fish have ever died from mango poisoning, no corals have been bleached yellow or orange or affected by too much beta carotene.

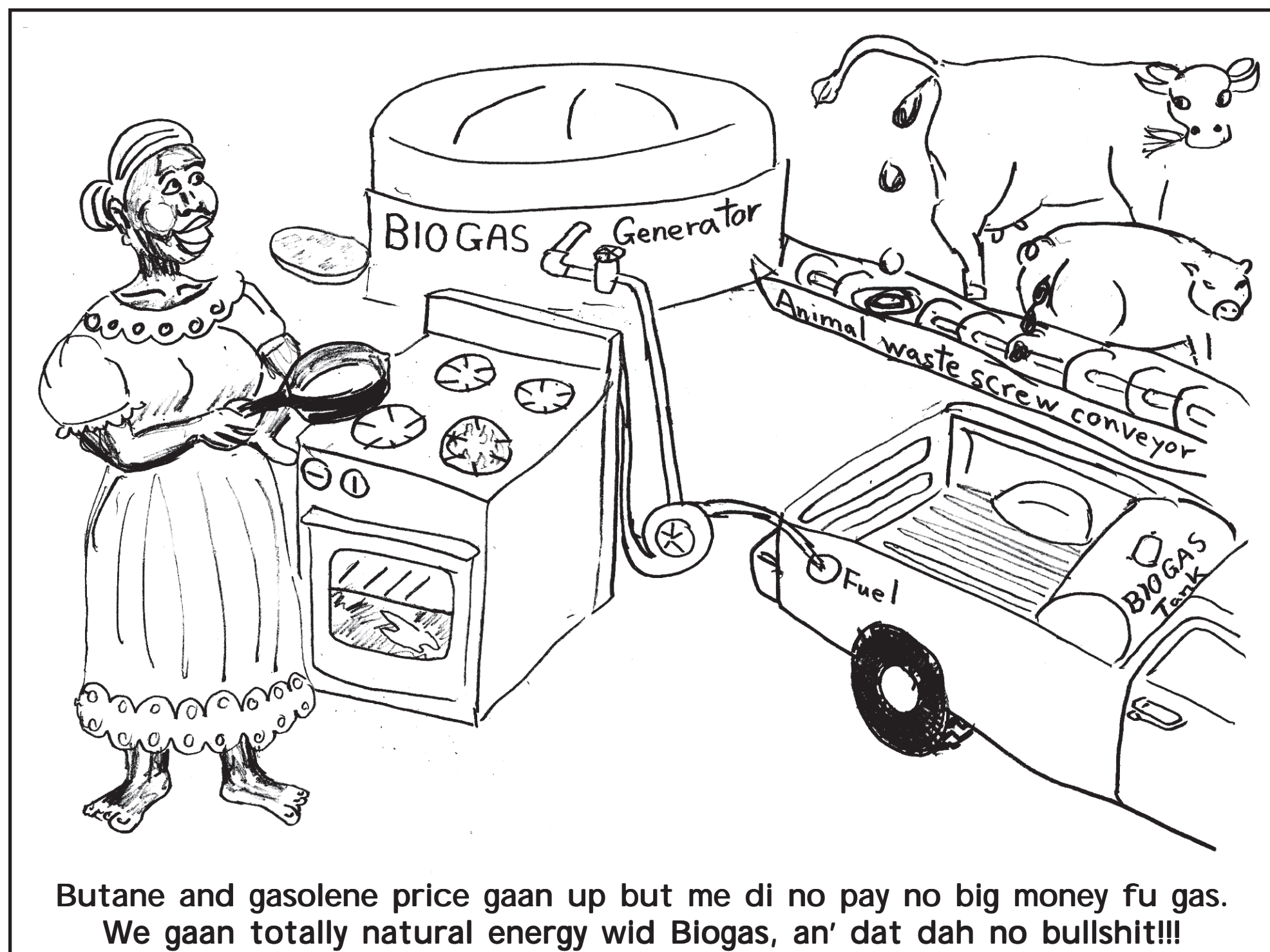
What could be more natural? Did not

center or pips, cast them out onto the winds or grasses so they can germinate and reproduce great trees and fruits of their own someday?

No doubt garbage pails and landfills were not part of the equation...

But for those mango seeds that survive the modern trash collection and disposal systems life must be pretty good in Belize.

Imagine growing up next to some home with boisterous, energetic children and talkative adults and friendly dogs. Providing shade to entire neighborhood convocations, birthday parties and



*National Health
Information and
Surveillance Unit*

The cover features a large, stylized red heart shape in the background. Overlaid on the heart is the title "HIV/AIDS SURVEILLANCE IN BELIZE" in a large, bold, blue serif font with a white outline. Below this, the subtitle "Yearly Report" is written in a smaller, italicized, blue serif font.

HIV/AIDS SURVEILLANCE IN BELIZE

Yearly Report

JANUARY - DECEMBER, 2006

January 15, 2006
BELIZE C.A

HIV/AIDS SURVEILLANCE IN BELIZE
JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 2006

GLOBAL SUMMARY OF THE HIV/AIDS EPIDEMIC IN BELIZE

Total new HIV INFECTIONS reported for the year 2006	443
Total new AIDS CASES reported for the year 2006	43
Total new AIDS DEATHS reported for the year 2006	75
Total reported HIV INFECTIONS since 1986 until end of December, 2006	3,805
Total reported AIDS CASES since 1986 until end of December, 2006	805
Total reported AIDS DEATHS since 1986 until end of December, 2006	701

The total number of New HIV Infections for the year 2006 was 443. In the previous year 2005, it was 434.

The total number of New AIDS Cases for the year 2006 was 43. In the previous year 2005, it was 30.

The total number of New AIDS Deaths for the year 2006 was 75. In the previous year 2005, it was 76.

The reported total number of HIV Infections from 1986 to end December 2006 was 3,805. The reported total number of HIV Infections from 1986 to end December 2005 was 3,362.

The reported total number of AIDS Cases from 1986 to end December 2006 was 805. The reported total number of AIDS Cases from 1986 to end December 2005 was 762.

The reported total number of AIDS Deaths from 1986 to end December 2006 was 701. The reported total number of AIDS Deaths from 1986 to end December 2005 was 626.

NEW HIV INFECTIONS AND PERCENTAGE BY DISTRICT JANUARY TO DECEMBER 2006.

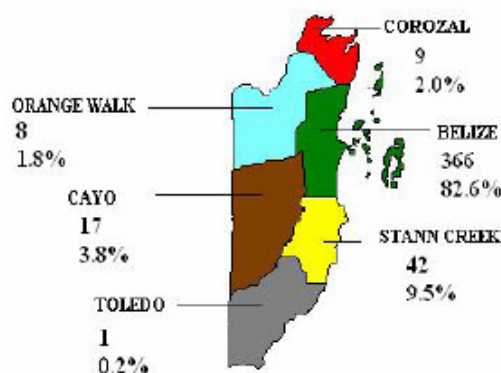


TABLE 1. NEW HIV INFECTIONS BY GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION IN PEOPLE TESTED AT CENTRAL MEDICAL LABORATORY (CML), BELIZE, DURING JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 2006.

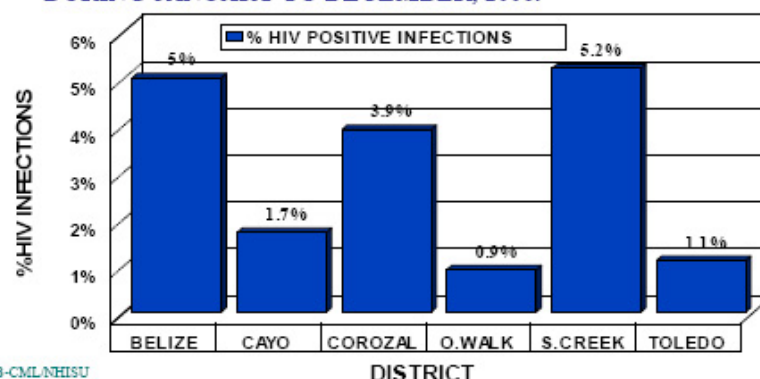
BELIZE DISTRICT		366
Belize City	360	
Gales Point	1	
Ladyville	5	
CAYO DISTRICT		17
Belmopan	13	
San Ignacio Town	4	
COROZAL DISTRICT		9
Corozal Town	9	
ORANGE WALK DISTRICT		8
Orange Walk Town	8	
STANN CREEK DISTRICT		42
Dangriga Town	39	
Independence	3	
TOLEDO DISTRICT		1
Punta Gorda Town	1	
CUMULATIVE TOTAL		443

SOURCE: CLAB-CML/NHISU

The distribution of HIV seropositivity in individuals tested at CML reported by districts for the year 2006 was a total of 443 new HIV infections with 366 (82.6%) in Belize, 17 (3.8%) in Cayo, 9 (2.0%) in Corozal, 8 (1.8%) in Orange Walk, 42 (9.5%) in Stann Creek and 1 (0.2%) in Toledo.

In the previous year, 2005 there was a total of 434 new HIV Infections with 396 (91.2%) in Belize, 9 (2.1%) in Cayo, 3 (0.7%) in Corozal, 3 (0.7%) in Orange Walk, 21 (4.8%) in Stann Creek and 2 (0.5%) in Toledo.

GRAPH 1 PERCENTAGE OF NEW POSITIVE INFECTIONS BY DISTRICT IN TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE TESTED AT CML, BELIZE, DURING JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 2006.

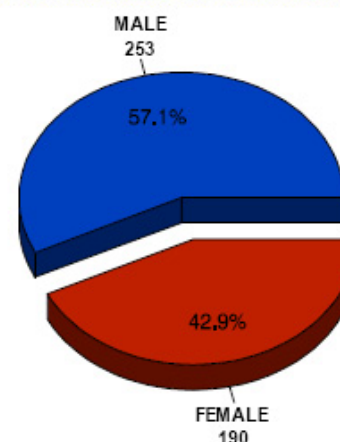


SOURCE: CLAB-CMLNHISU

The percentage of new HIV positive infections in individuals tested at CML for the year 2006 was 5.0% in Belize District, 1.7% in Cayo District, 3.9% in Corozal District, 0.9% in Orange Walk District, 5.2% in Stann Creek District and 1.1% in Toledo District.

In the previous year, 2005 it was 4.2% in Belize District, 1.5% in Cayo District, 0.7% in Corozal District, 0.5% in Orange Walk District, 2.5% in Stann Creek District and 2.0% in Toledo District.

GRAPH 2 NEW HIV INFECTIONS BY SEX IN PEOPLE TESTED AT CML, BELIZE, DURING JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 2006.



SOURCE: CLAB-CML/NHISU

For the year 2006 there were 253 males and 190 females who were newly diagnosed as HIV + (Ratio male: female 1.3:1).

In the previous year, 2005 there were 224 males and 210 females who were newly diagnosed as HIV + (Ratio male: female 1.06:1).

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Defining Objectives

By: Richard Harrison

OBJECTIVE: *noun*

What one intends to do or achieve: aim, ambition, design, end, goal, intent, intention, mark, meaning, object, point, purpose, target, view, why. **Idioms:** end in view, why and wherefore. See planned purpose.

I spent 1996-97 at Lancaster University School of Management reading for their Masters in Business Administration certificate. This was fulfilling an objective I had set for myself before I had completed my Bachelors Degree in Pharmacy in Michigan.at a time when I was completely broke and had no knowledge of how this objective would be financed.

One of my world re-known strategy professors came into the auditorium one day. ...and wrote the letters S.M.A.R.T. on the blackboard. He asked if anyone would volunteer to say what was understood by the letters that were so written. We had 60 students in the course, from 22 countries around the world. Needless to say, there were many different perspectives expressed for the meaning of those letters.

The professor went on to disclose his purpose for raising this topic. He wanted us to discuss the process by which 'good' objectives can be set. We had already discussed the importance of setting objectives in previous conferences. He wanted to establish some sets of criteria by which objectives would be deemed to meet the threshold of being 'good' managerial decisions.

The word 'good' reflects some degree of measure of quality. Hence, he suggested that the quality of the objectives we set is reflective of our degree of commitment to challenge ourselves to obtaining the best possible outcomes from our managerial pursuits. It is also reflective of the degree of transparency and accountability with which a manager open up to scrutiny by stakeholders. Usually, poor quality managers would set poor quality objectives, consequently any performance appraisal becomes difficult and elusive. Poor quality objectives are often a sign of lack of commitment to achieving them. Even worse is when NO objective is set for important parameters that would be used to measure and declare success.

He suggested that one simple way of improving on the quality of our objective setting, is to use the letters SMART against the objectives that we set for ourselves.

1. Specific – Objectives should specify what they want to achieve.
2. Measurable – You should be able to measure whether you are meeting the objectives or not.
3. Achievable - Are the objectives you

set, achievable and attainable?

4. Realistic – Can you realistically achieve the objectives with the resources you have?

5. Time – When do you want to achieve the set objectives?

SPECIFIC

Some typical national objective might be stated as “to increase exports”, or “to increase investments”, or “to increase employment”, or “to increase productivity”, or “to improve the quality of primary education”.

These are very general statements. They do not meet the criteria of being specific enough, and their 'goodness' as objectives can be brought into question. Exports of what? Increased by how much? To where? Through what distribution channel? At what competitive level? Under what framework?

MEASURABLE

On the other hand, if a national objective is “to build 10,000 new houses over the next five years”, this is more specific and measurable in that it states the amount of houses and over what time frame. However it can be criticized for not saying what kind of houses, what price range, under what terms, for responding to the needs and means of what target population, nor how it would be financed. After the fact, one could go back and say they meant mobile homes, and that the amount included mortgages financed by the private sector; and they would be quite within the stated objective.

ACHIEVABLE

“To meet the demand for tertiary level education in Belize”. Yet, no one can say exactly how many persons demand a tertiary level education, what the subgroups are willing and able to pay for it, the varying levels of background preparation to successfully undertake it, whether short certificate courses or full curriculum courses, or what logistics in time would best suit their need for generating income while studying. If there are over 48,000 persons between the ages of 20-29, and 50% of these were demanding some form of tertiary education or training, there would be 24,000 persons. Would Belize have sufficient trained instructors to meet this demand? Would such a goal be achievable?

REALISTIC

“To produce 10,000 new jobs over the next five years”. If this objective is set along with another which says “to reduce the level of unemployment”; then it might not be realistic. If there are 32,000 persons coming into the work force during the same five year period, creating only 10,000 new jobs would not serve to reduce the level of unemployment.

TIMELY

“Health for all by the year 2000”.

This a typical cliché that sounded off during 1980's and 90's; typical of the socialist sound-bites emanating from the United Nations at the time, and gladly propagated by the local socialites. Sure it sets a specific timeframe, but does not say anything about whether its primary, secondary or tertiary health care; it does not say if ALL covers only workers or extends to all citizens and residents regardless of employment status. Indeed, it is so vague as to be meaningless even unto this day; yet many dollars were poured into the hands of those who printed posters, banners, leaflets, t-shirts and so many other paraphernalia that promoted this vaguity.

Belizeans should become more interested their national objectives. They should pay more attention to the objectives that are put forward by national manifestos. Setting poor quality objectives has plagued Belize for decades, and is reflective of the type of commitment we hold our leaders to, as well as their own lack of moral commitment to serve the people using the best managerial principles available to them. But, it would be worse to accept that “no objectives will be set, as we do not know the situation of the national finances that we will meet when we assume government”.

While the SMART framework establishes a set of criteria for improving our objective setting, there is still a lot of

refining that can be done to improve objective setting at a national level beyond this framework. This framework calls for declaration of GENERAL and SPECIFIC objectives, so that a 'big picture' and a more 'detailed picture' can be expressed objectives in concise a manner as possible. One leader once emphasized to me to use economy of words. I have learned that while that is valuable, it is more valuable to express completeness of thought. This framework would be a good start however, to help us to raise our standards for objective setting.

One can see clearly, that by setting better quality objectives, the potential for improved monitoring and evaluation of performance is automatically achieved. The pressure increases for managers to become more transparent and accountable by this built-in mechanism.

We clamor for transparency and accountability as one of our national objectives, and one way to assure that this is complied with, is to insist on improved quality of national objectives that are stated from the onset. When we are pandered to with poor quality objectives, we should be able to identify them immediately by qualifying them against the SMART criteria, and question the persons or parties who deem us so ignorant as to disrespect our good judgment by providing us with poor quality objectives.or worse.no objectives at all!



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Divide and Conquer



By: William Schmidt
PG correspondent for
INdependent Weekly

When will our Belizean people learn? The way to build the new Belize and to be sure all are involved in, and benefit from the peaceful, constructive Belizean revolution, is to stand together, because in unity is the strength we need. Don't trust those who try to separate us. Trust those who try to and do bring us together!

Now people from outside, have come again into Belize to support another lawsuit against our government. They have helped to organize some of the forgotten people of Toledo and encourage them to protest against the discrimination they've been and still are suffering. The last time it was the Indian Law Resource Center. They told the Maya people if they protested and filed a lawsuit against our government they would get the 500,000 acre Maya Homeland the foreigners promised.

This was impossible and an absurd lie. But the people from outside had the money to pay local coordinators and to fly local Maya leaders to other countries where indigenous people were able to get control of land. No one would help our people to promote their own plans for a realistic Eco Park, so these foreigners were able to pay some of the local leaders to support their plans to divide our people and to turn many Belizeans against the people of Toledo so they would not have sympathy for their legitimate protest against the discrimination they were suffering. I'm not saying the local leaders understood what their new friends' true intentions were.

It was a very effective way to divide the Belizeans of Maya descent, many of whom who did not support the Maya Homeland idea and to separate the Belizeans of other ancestry who were really upset with the idea that the Maya of Toledo wanted to establish a Maya Homeland where only Maya could get land and live on it, while Belizeans of other ethnic backgrounds would have to be approved by the Maya council, but the Maya supporters of a homeland concept would be free to go to any other

part of Belize to live wherever they wanted.

With the Belizeans of Maya ancestry representing only approximately 10 percent of the total population of Belize and with few if any government ministers of the day of Maya descent and the two area representatives of Toledo East and West being non Maya, what chance would such an absurd idea have of passing into law?

It was a very affective method however for dividing our Belizean people, which is in my opinion exactly what I believe the foreign supporters of the idea had in mind. I have lived in Toledo for over 37 years and before the Maya Homeland I never heard racist remarks against the Maya by the people of Toledo. I did hear government ministers and foreign funders and their non-governmental organizations speak against the Maya and Garifuna as being backward, ignorant and unable to work together, too independent, resisting constructive change etcetera as justification for their government's and funder's failed projects. But discrimination against the Maya by local citizens of Toledo was very rare until the Maya Homeland was promoted and financed by outsiders. I have many Maya friends who did not think the proposal was fair or that it would work. And I can't remember any non Maya Belizean who really supported it. Of course there were several foreigners who could see the Maya were being taken advantage of by the funders and the non-governmental organizations, who sympathized with their poverty and supported the Maya Homeland as a way to help the indigenous people.

The Indian Law Resource Center was said to be a front for the CIA whose job is to support American economic interests abroad. They were suspected in Nicaragua by the Sandinistas and later by the Zapatistas in Mexico.

I personally spoke to several representatives of the Indian Law Resource Center when they were supporting the Maya Homeland project. I explained how the proposed Toledo People's Eco Park would help the Maya as well as the Garifuna, East Indian, Mestizo and Creoles to get control of their community lands using the Special Development Areas Plan (SDA), and the Toledo Alcaldes and Village Council Act. But they steadfastly refused to abandon the Maya Homeland Plan or to support the Eco Park Plan alternative. This led me to believe what the Sandinistas reportedly said about them.

If any reader wants to know why the CIA would want to prevent the

Maya and others from getting a good development plan for Toledo, I believe they knew oil exists here in Toledo. That it was a strategic oil reserve too small to develop economically at the time, but good to have available if and when needed. Once the Middle East erupted the value of any oil in the U.S. of A's backyard increased greatly. You notice who owns the oil company that is sucking up Belize's rich black blood today.

Now that the Indian Law Resource Center's cover has been so badly blown by our neighbors and the Maya Homeland has been shot down. Most Maya know that it was unrealistic and they would not believe the center again. So another foreign human Indian rights organization from the states has shown up. They have organized another court case trying as some non Maya people in the street have said, to Mayanize Toledo like Balkanizes.

Right Honorable George Price and Honorable Manuel Esquivel both personally told me they would never agree to divide up Belize into different ethnic parts. Belize, all Belize, should be for all Belizeans.

What makes me highly suspicious of this new effort to divide the people of Belize is the same thing that made me suspicious of the last attempt. The current Maya leaders and their new found foreign friends of this new case also refuse to support the proposed Toledo People's Eco Park Plan, and none of them can give one single reason why. The Eco Park Plan works within the current framework of the law. It was designed to work with the Alcaldes, Village Council and Toledo Development Corporation's Act's. It also calls for no more National land to be sold or leased by government. That both private property and communal land be recognized.

The Eco Park Plan has a conservation element that will protect the endangered watershed, while it sup-

ports the traditional communal land sharing system for agriculture. It also supports protection of the endangered flora and fauna with the Biosphere Plan of core areas connected by wildlife corridors, buffer zones for regulated extraction of forest products and development areas for sustainable organic farming, by and for all the people of Toledo District.

The planners of the Eco Park know that the old traditional Maya farming and forest extraction system was not so good once the population increased beyond the forest's ability to sustain them. Eventually they had to move from Belize. Now the population is growing again, but the amount of available land remains the same. There is an old saying that those who fail to learn from past mistakes are destined to make them again.

The question concerned Belizeans should ask is why these foreign indigenous rights activists and the Maya leaders who are working with them haven't supported the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan? It offers a realistic solution to Toledo's very real problems, a solution that recognizes the equal rights of all the citizens of Toledo, young and old, male and female, rich and poor from Puta Gorda Town and the rural villages.

In 2003, representatives of all the democratically elected leaders of Toledo, the largest conservation, cultural and development organizations, the President of The Toledo Civil Society and even the United States Peace Corps signed in support of the further development of the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan. Dr. Ludwick Palacio, General Manager of the Toledo Development Corporation who drafted the Memorandum of Understanding rightly called it a truly historic document. Why the Minister of Economic Development refuse to support it?

Concerned Belizeans should demand an answer.

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Belize is a Whore!

By: Meb Cutlack

Under this present PUP government Belize has become a whore. not just any old whore though - because she only sleeps with the high rollers and the very rich.

She sleeps with Fortis, she sleeps with Ashcroft, she sleeps with Feinstein and she sleeps with any old environmental abuser who has the money.

And, just like any real whore, she has her pimps – “developers” and “environmental consultants” and others. They sleep with her and also take their cut of her earnings.

Drug war in Belize? No, it’s a drug arrangement because our whore, while ‘cleaning’ up the streets around her bedroom and prosecuting marijuana smokers, sleeps with the cocaine drug lords and takes her cut.

It might not be so bad if she spent her ill-gotten money down the block

but she doesn’t. She banks in Panama.

For donkeys years our whore has been sleeping happily (for oodles of bucks) with Taiwan - but now a rival has stepped into the picture. The Peoples Republic of China has paid court to her. Even she knows she can’t sleep with both China and Taiwan and so she will have sleepless nights until one or the other of the two clients comes up with the highest bid.

On the subject of corruption, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) today signed an agreement to strengthen the fight against corruption in the Americas.

The organization said that cooperation would center on issues such as, “avoiding conflicts of interest; promoting integrity through transparency and accountability; and enhancing resistance to corruption in

risk areas such as public procurement, contract management and lobbying.”

This, on the same day that the Prime Minister Said Musa refused to release details of the massive \$33,000,000 debt handed to the Belizean public by the secret hospital deal.

He told Channel 5 that requests for disclosure of the contents of the guarantee, “have to be denied based on confidentiality for banking documents. The P.M. went on to assert that in December 2004, Belmopan did in fact guarantee Universal’s debt at the Belize Bank”

Musa maintained to Channel 5 that without consent from the shareholders of Universal or the Belize Bank, under the law, government is not able to release the details.

Channel 5: “That position has hit a sour note with the public, most of who argue that since taxpayer

money will be used to pay off the debt, the public has a vested interest in the contents of the guarantee.”

This sour note has hit a new high with the government’s constant pandering to offshore financial groups in the sale of huge areas of Belizean coast and islands for dubious projects with little or no real survey of the environmental consequences of their actions.

They don’t even take the advice of their own tame specialists who prostitute themselves with their less than adequate assessments of the real local, and global warming, effects of some of their favorite projects.

It is time that our whore sought a new way of life - which perhaps a new government could provide.

Whores and prostitutes: Those who compromise principles for personal gain.

OAS & OECD agree to fight corruption

The Organization of American States (OAS) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) today signed an agreement to strengthen the fight against corruption in the Americas. The memorandum of understanding will establish a legal framework in which both entities will work together in anti-corruption efforts as well as state modernization.

“This has to do with two inter-related and critical issues for the consolidation of democratic governance, economic growth and the social development of our countries,” OAS Secretary General José Miguel Insulza said during a brief ceremony at the regional body’s headquarters.

Insulza explained that these issues “are very important so that our democracies are not only democracies from an electoral point of view, but also countries that are able to continue developing political and civilian citizenship and citizen participation.”

In terms of state modernization, both organizations identified several areas of potential cooperation, including E-government; public employment and management; budgeting and public expenditures; and open government and citizen participation, among others.

On the anti-corruption front, cooperation would center on issues such as avoiding conflicts of interest; promoting integrity through transparency and accountability; and enhancing resistance to corruption in risk areas such as public procurement, contract management and lobbying.

For his part, OECD Secretary General Ángel Gurría noted that his or-

ganization has a long history of fighting corruption globally. However, he stressed the importance of being able to expand its efforts in this region, “because we only have one Latin American member country in the OECE – Mexico. This is a very exciting and very important opportunity to work with an institution that would then work with all the countries to offer this support,” he said.

Secretary General Insulza reiterated that the fight against corruption is a high-priority issue within the OAS, noting that the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, adopted in 1996, was the first treaty of its kind in the world. This

treaty “has become the navigational chart of our collective action in this field,” noted Insulza, adding that it has been ratified by 33 of the 34 OAS member countries.

The OECD, like the OAS, has long been committed to the fight against corruption. In 1997 the OECD created the Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign International Business Transactions, and continues to monitor its enforcement through regular meetings of its Working Group on Bribery.

Both organizations have likewise pushed for modernization of the state, which would allow for greater efficiency and transparency.

The agreement signed between the OAS and OECD is an extension of a cooperative relationship that began in 1963. Recent collaborative efforts include a September 2006 technical meeting held in Chile on international bribery investigations and a May 2004 meeting in Brazil which centered on conflict-of-interest issues.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, a forum of 30 democracies, provides a setting in which governments can compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify best practices and coordinate domestic and international policies.



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hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.



Current Issues

Bribery, Corruption, Lies and incompetence

By: Meb Cutlack

The PUP seem to imagine, in their wild dreams, that the Belizean electorate will somehow come to forgive them; forgive their two terms of total incompetence, horrifying corruption and greed and bribery almost beyond human reckoning

They seem to think that Belizeans don't mind or notice the yawning pit of poverty and deprivation which has replaced prosperity and hope.

They do not seem to realize that a little more time – March or June until 2008 – will not make them any more elector-able than they are today. And, they are not elector-able today, tomorrow or next year.

They no longer have any hope of being re-elected.

The simple truth is that two generations, or more, of Belizeans now have burned indelibly into their consciousness the fact that the PUP is a crooked bunch of self serving, greedy, corrupt and incompetent liars who are incapable of honest government.

Even their elaborate 'crony' system, of 'selling' government assets at bargain

prices with government money to their chosen few in return for chunks of 'election' money, is beginning to tumble in on itself. The 'cronies' are finding out that the cookies, which they thought they had been handed, had in fact been handed to rival cronies as well.

The 'cookie jar', in the immortal words in the House of Representatives of Michael Finnigan, is empty. The cookies have run out and all the attempts by the PUP to disillusion their supporters with phony promises of oil land, islands and huge tracts of property are now empty promises.

Even if handed over (by false conveyances) oil lands, islands or anything else are liable to very close scrutiny by whoever is elected in 2008 and 'should' lead to immediate prosecution and, in many cases to imprisonment .

The PUP live in a carnival house of mirrors in which each mirror reveals not the true image but the image they want to see. When they walk through it they can see fat for thin, thin for fat, short for tall, sober for drunk.

Said Musa, Ralph Fonseca and Godfrey Smith and the others can dance

in front of these mirrors all day long but they cannot change their real shape.

The people now see and know this real shape.

The people of Belize want not only change, at this moment from blue to red, but they also want a dramatic change in the manner in which they are governed. They don't want another 25 years of theft and corruption.

While the PUP is, for obvious reasons, totally against any form of political reform it appears that the UDP has its heels equally dug in on the subject of an elected senate.

It does not take a genius to figure out that an elected senate builds in certain safeguards against corruption - as all the emerging reform parties have so adequately demonstrated by their nationwide support.

No, it's not perfect but it appears the only method to stop the abuse of power that is endemic with Cabinet government where all power rests in the hands of one or two men.

A short time ago this writer sat down with a high official of the UDP who complained that the INdependent newspa-

per was unfairly comparing the UDP to the PUP.

The discussion ended up centered on the subject of an elected senate - and it equally 'broke down' on this subject. There appears to be no way the UDP will endorse the idea of an elected senate - not even to have an immediate bipartisan, internationally supervised commission, to look into the pros and cons of such an elected second chamber.

The problem with this blank 'NO' is that critics, and even supporters of the UDP, are left with the impression that the UDP refuses to acknowledge the fallibility of man. They refuse to accept that much of mankind, for all protestations to the contrary, is not always incorrupt-able. They are asking us to believe that hidden in their bag of electoral goodies are men of extraordinary statue who will not be susceptible to bribery and who will rise above the example the Belizean people have of 25 years of incompetent and often corrupt government.

This writer personally would like the safeguard of an elected senate – or at least an ample reason why not.

People's National Party honours Julian Cho

PNP Leader Wil Maheia calls for unity and support for Maya land rights struggle.

Punta Gorda Town, Toledo—Wil Maheia, PNP Leader spoke at the Julian Cho memorial on Saturday, April 7, 2007. Maheia said, “All Belizeans should support the Maya land struggle because all Belizeans will benefit if the Mayans are successful in defending their land rights”.

“The government of Belize regularly violates the land rights of Belizeans especially in the rural areas like Toledo. Julian Cho brought to the attention of the people of Belize that planning was needed before the Southern highway came in. Communities along the Southern highway were promised land use rights for two miles along the highway on both sides, but the Gob did not keep their promise,” continued Maheia.

Julian would have been proud of the



Mayan leader Julian Cho, who died tragically in December 1998, championed rights of the Toledo Maya.

lawsuit brought against the GOB. His fight was not in vain. Julian always urged Mayans to work together and I want to do the same. All of the Mayan organizations, The Maya Leaders Alliance,

The Julian Cho Society, The Alcalde's Association and the Toledo Maya Women's Council need to be united to win this fight. --PNP press release

Visit The Belize Zoo

The Best Little Zoo In The World

Your weekly

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)
Older family members may take advantage of you by making you feel guilty. Don't blame every thing on your mate. Be sure to keep communication open with those you live with. Concentrate on spending quality time with children. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- may 21)
A change is as good as a rest. Don't go looking for change. You may have more to do with children this week; keep an open mind. You are best to work at home, clearing up overdue projects. Rewards for past good deeds will be yours. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)
Catch up on your reading and correspondence. You will get out of shape easily if you don't keep on top of things. You need a change and you need to earn more cash. Someone around you may not be trustworthy. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
Good friends will give you honest answers. Jealousy may be a contributing factor to your emotional ups and downs. You can get into self awareness groups or look into physical enhancement programs. New love connections can be made through group associations. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)
Someone envious of your popularity may challenge you to a debate. Travel for business will not only bring you valuable information but also profits as well.

Secret affairs will come back to haunt you. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)
You can come up with ways of earning extra cash. Be creative in your efforts. Try to be tolerant of the moods of those around you. Go out with friends and avoid the situation on the home front. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)
Be cautious while traveling; minor accidents are evident. You can't lock your partner up and if you keep restricting their freedom you may be left out in the cold. Relationships have not been the best for you lately and it's left you somewhat gun shy. Keep an open mind when listening to the opinions of others. Uncertainties about your personal life are probable. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
You will profit from home improvement projects and real estate deals. Your ability to deal with humanitarian groups will enhance your reputation. Use your creative talent in order to accomplish your goals. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)
Don't get so wrapped up in being rich that you overlook the fact that your plan may not be as solid as you thought. Someone you live with could be frustrated and upset. Disappointments are likely if your mate embarrasses you in front of friends. Partners may try to argue with you; however, you must stand

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Dumb as Einstein

A young boy enters a barber shop and the barber whispers to his customer, "This is the dumbest kid in the world. Watch while I prove it to you." The barber puts a dollar coin in one hand and two shillings in the other, then calls the boy over and asks, "Which do you want, son?" The boy takes the shillings and leaves. "What did I tell you?" said the barber. "That kid never learns!" Later, when the customer leaves, he sees the same young boy coming out of the ice cream store. "Hey son, may I ask you a question? Why did you take the shillings instead of the dollar coin?" The boy licked his cone and replied, "Because the day I take the dollar, the game's over!"

A boy comes home from school and his mom says "What did you learn in

school?" He replies, "Obviously not enough because I have to go back again tomorrow!"

There were 4 people in an army plane: the pilot, and three soldiers. The pilot said that they were weighted down and told the soldiers to throw whatever items they didn't need off the plane. The first soldier throws off his gold star badge. The second soldier throws off his silver star badge. The third soldier grabbed a bunch of grenades and threw them off the plane. The plane landed safely and the soldiers decided to retrieve their items. The first soldier went to where he thought his gold badge landed. There he found a little boy crying. He asked what was wrong and the boy said a gold star fell from the sky and killed his father. The soldier felt ashamed and went away. The second soldier went to where he thought his silver badge landed. There he saw a little boy crying. When asked why the boy said a silver star fell from the sky and killed his sister. The soldier was ashamed and went away. The third soldier went to where he thought his grenades would be and there he saw a little boy LAUGHING. He asked what was up and the boy answered "I farted and my house blew up!"

your ground. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)
Opportunities to get ahead will be evident. You can pick up some overtime this week. You will meet new and exciting people if you attend social activities or sporting events. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)
Your mate will be pushing you to do things that you really don't want to do. You are best to put your efforts into re-

decorating or inviting friends over. Empty promises will cause confusion. Tell it like it is. You will be accident prone if you aren't careful this week. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)
You may be likely to have difficulties with females. Romantic opportunities are evident. This will not be the best time to initiate change. There might be a problem with a will or with an insurance policy. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



THE

hunt

HEALTHY

FOR

FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

BULL FROG INN

Ring Road, Belmopan

Our new healthy focus doesn't mean we won't eat. We will just eat more selectively! We decided to pop by the legendary Bull Frog Inn in Belmopan one Saturday lunchtime and see if we could manage to keep to the plan.

★

★

★

1/2

First of all the service was great and the atmosphere was nice. We ordered the ceviche, skipping the chips, and a club sandwich, skipping the fries. Both were excellent and prepared nicely. Although the menu tempted us with other fare, and a daiquiri sounded delightful on a hot afternoon, we managed to have a belly full of satisfaction and quench with minimum guilt on the food and no guilt at all on bottle water! We are told the key to eating healthy is not going Vegan, but instead eating smaller portions and avoiding the deep fried sins at all cost....so far so good and a thumbs up to the Bull Frog

OPEN DAILY, BREAKFAST, LUNCH & DINNER

Prices: \$6.00 and up

TOPICAL TIDBITS

Oil for 100 years!



CARACAS, Venezuela (Bloomberg): Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez has called for the creation of a Latin American energy system to prioritize local markets in a “true energy revolution,” guaranteeing oil and gas supply to the region for 100 years.

“All the oil and energy that Latin America needs is here in Venezuela,” Chávez said at a graduation ceremony in Caracas. “That resource, once in the hands of the empire, is now in Venezuelan hands, and we have it to share with the people of Cuba and the Caribbean, Nicaragua and Central America, Brazil and South America , at least for 100 years.”

Chávez called proposals by US President George W. Bush to substitute gasoline with ethanol in a bid to reduce US reliance on foreign oil, “true craziness” that “go against nature” and threaten the region’s poorest inhabitants.

“To produce the ethanol necessary to replace the gasoline that the US alone consumes, we’d have to plant almost all the land on this continent with corn or sugar cane - not to feed people, but to feed the cars of the US empire,” he said.

Oil’s other legacy



Aljazeera: Ecuador’s natural resources are central to the country’s economy, with oil accounting for 40 per cent of export earnings.

But oil revenues, which make up a third of the government’s budget, come at a cost to the environment and activists say at a cost to the health of Ecuadorians living in the affected areas.

Maria Garofalo, a mother of six, has lived next door to a pumping station for 20 years. She has ovarian cancer and says her illness is a result of the fumes and waste she has been exposed to in that time. “All the smoke from those burners comes in the house. When it rains the roof turns black, the same colour as the water in the tank. That’s what’s affecting my health,” she said.

Garofalo lives in San Carlos, a small town in Ecuador’s Amazon basin where the oil industry has operated since the 1960s.

The town also has the highest incidence of cancer in the country, while among children there are high rates of skin disease, throat pains and diarrhoea.

A lawsuit, filed in 1993 and representing 30,000 local people, alleges that Texaco, the US oil company which is today part of Chevron, is responsible for the contamination of more than 25,000 square kilometres of Ecuadorian rainforest.

The lawsuit also alleges that more than six-and-a-half-billion cubic metres of gas were pumped into the air.

Mexican farmers protest Plan Puebla Panama



Over 2,000 farmers were in Mexico City last week to protest what they believe is the real objective of the Puebla-Panama Plan (PPP) Summit : to expel them from their lands.

Luis Antonio Che, leader of the Emiliano Zapata Farmer Front, said contingents mobilized to reject the summit, despite deployment of police and federal agents along roads leading to the city.

Meanwhile, social activists consider the PPP meeting also aims to channel oil and other natural resources in the region to benefit large foreign and national investors, chiefly those in the United States.

Guatemalans protest too

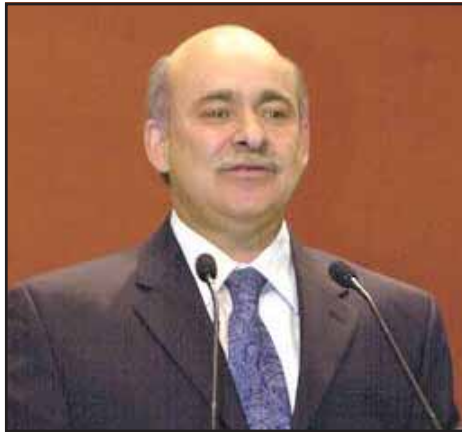


Guatemala: Thousands of Guatemalan health workers marched in the capital and other cities last Tuesday to reject a plan aimed at putting these services in the hands of the private sector.

The so-called Health Framework Act, one of the four elements of the country’s Vision Plan, is no more than the covert privatization of state-run hospitals, union leader Thelma Estrada told *Prensa Latina*.

Union leaders say the country’s Vision Plan means putting the State constitutional responsibility to offer free health services in the hands of private business people.

FTAA will remain stalled



Mexican Economy Secretary Eduardo Sojo said in Japan that the U.S.-led Free Trade Area of the Americas scheme is likely to remain stalled in the foreseeable future as negotiations between the United States and the leftist-dominated South America on the issue have been deadlocked for the past few years.

“It makes no sense to proceed at this point in time,” Sojo said in an interview

at the Mexican Embassy in Tokyo on Tuesday. Sojo is visiting Japan to commemorate the second anniversary of the enforcement of the Japan-Mexico Economic Partnership Agreement.

While expressing the Mexican government’s continued support for the FTAA scheme, Sojo said, “Because there is no consensus in the region at this point, the best strategy [for Mexico] is to continue with bilateral agreements.”

The scheme hit an impasse in 2005, however, after a bitter round of talks over liberalization of agricultural markets between the United States and Brazil that failed to reach an accord.

On the EPA with Japan - Mexico’s only free trade pact in Asia - Sojo stressed that it has “benefited Mexico as well as Japan,” as shown in the nearly 30 percent growth of Mexican exports entering the Japanese market since it came into effect two years ago.

Wolfowitz apologises over pay row



World Bank President Paul Wolfowitz has apologised for “mistakes” made over the promotion and pay of an ex-colleague with whom he is romantically involved. Mr Wolfowitz’s partner, Shaha Riza, was moved to the State (Please Turn To Page 12)





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National Eco-support Group forming



By: Nadja Chamberlain

People with a deep knowledge of the natural systems of Belize are coming together to watchdog the development of Belize by forming a group called Belize EcoWatch Alliance. Their plans are to stay alert, keep communication open between government departments and the envi-

ronmental community, bring together and assist regional groups who are facing and fighting environmentally destructive projects in specific locations, and help with the struggle to keep Belize from losing what makes Belize "The Jewel".

The group will be reviewing sections of certain Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA's) that pertain to their specific scientific, professional, or local knowledge and then will issue a report on that EIA. Their assistance could ultimately include helping in the preparation of law suits by providing scientific data and local knowledge that support their case and interpret this information in terms that could be understood by the average person.

This group will try to see that the citizens of Belize are informed of

what decisions are being made, by whom they are being made, and what is being affected by these decisions. They will be joining efforts at local, regional, and national levels in the hope that scientific facts and local knowledge of the ecosystems of Belize will be the basis for land use decisions.

The group is looking for people with knowledge of any of the environmental sciences and environmental law, with or without a degree, whether they are students, professionals, or local residents with an understanding of the natural world in their area of Belize. They welcome all those who want to be sure their very way of life is not destroyed by thoughtless planning and development that does not benefit the people of Belize or pro-

tect its natural systems.

This is NOT a group that plans to have meetings and more meetings and not accomplish anything. This is a group that may seldom meet together but that primarily will stay in communication through e-mail and be ready to jump to respond to serious environmental issues. With Stake Bank, North Drowned Caye, the Belize Cruise Terminal, Smugglers Run, Maya Plantation, Ambergris Belize Resort, Ma Lo Ha, Corozal Yacht Club and SATIIM oil exploration (all coastal developments with EIAs either pending or recently reviewed), Belize is definitely in a crisis on the coast.

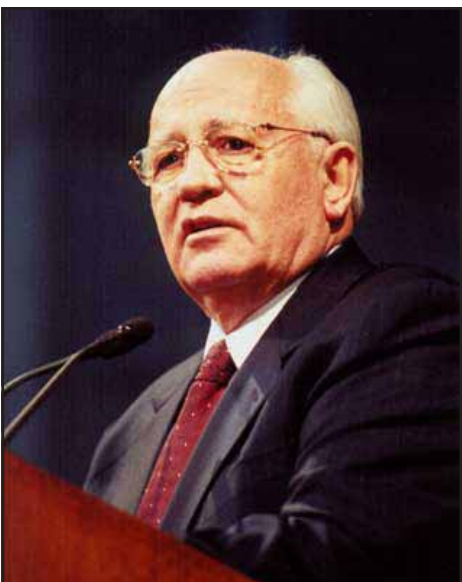
If you would like to join in this effort, contact the group at this e-mail address: bzecowatch@gmail.com

TOPICAL TIDBITS

➡ (Continued From Page 11)

Department when he took the Bank's top job in 2005. But the bank's staff association says she then received pay rises and promotions which were "grossly out of line" with the Bank's staff rules. The controversy comes ahead of joint World Bank and IMF spring meetings. Mr Wolfowitz also said he would accept any remedy that the World Bank's Board proposed. The bank chief - formerly US deputy secretary of defence - has adopted a fiercely anti-corruption stance. The latest furor threatens to undermine Mr. Wolfowitz's personal campaign to combat corruption and poor governance.

Gorbachev warns about US plans



KALININGRAD, April 12 (RIA Novosti) - Deployment of U.S. missile-defense bases in Poland and the Czech Republic is an attempt by the U.S. to control Europe, the former Soviet president said Thursday.

"It is all about influence and domi-



nation in Europe," Mikhail Gorbachev said. "I believe it is wrong that America did not even bother to consult its NATO allies."

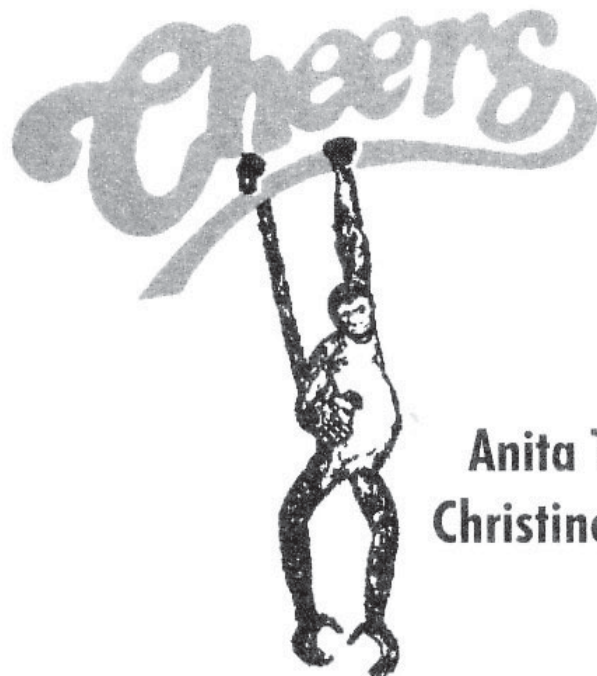
Asked how Russia could respond to these plans, he only said: "Time will

show."

The U.S. revealed plans in January to deploy elements of its missile defense system in the Czech Republic and Poland to counter possible attacks from Iran or North Korea, whose nuclear programs have provoked serious international concerns.

Russia, which has been anxious about NATO bases that have appeared in former Communist-bloc countries and ex-Soviet republics, has blasted the plans to deploy anti-missile systems in Central Europe as a national security threat and a destabilizing factor for Europe.

**Comments? Suggestions?
or want to share your
thoughts**
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E-Mail: chrissey@cheersrestaurant.bz

Peninsula Citizens... protest illegal mining

☛☛☛ (Continued From Page 13)
mining activity to the Department of Geology with no action by Geology. The police have now shut down the sand mining operation at Lot 146.

Loewen has publicly stated that he has an “agreement” with the Department of Geology allowing him to mine sand from the Lagoon without a permit. This is contrary to the laws of Belize and, we believe, is a criminal offense both by Loewen and the Department of Geology, if true.

We would like not only a response from the Department of Geology regarding this alleged agreement, but also copies of all dredging and mining permits issued by Geology for the Placencia Lagoon, as well as copies of all Environmental Compliance Plans for developments on the Placencia Peninsula. We will gladly pay for all copies of these PUBLIC documents, and will also arrange to



The illegally mined sand has been piled up at Villas at Coco Plum.

have them picked up in Belmopan. PCSD would also like to put both

the Department of the Environment and the Department of Geology on notice that our citizens group intends to monitor ALL development approvals on the Peninsula AND to publicly question all decisions by the Department of Environment when it decides NOT to require full-fledged EIAs for developments that may have an impact on the Peninsula and the Placencia Lagoon. Both dredging and cutting of mangroves will be of particular focus for our group.

Attached are some pictures of Loewen’s illegal dredging. These pictures were taken by various people on the Peninsula.

We await your reply.
Sincerely,
Leonard Williams, President
Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development

Guatemalan Bishop banned

Guatemalan Catholic Bishop Alvaro Ramazzini was barred from addressing journalists at the IDB meeting.

The Bishop learned, to his surprise, that he is considered a big threat to finance ministers and bankers.

Ramazzini, bishop of the overwhelmingly indigenous San Marcos diocese, and three Maya leaders, were kept out of the press conference with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on social inclusion and inequality by the Guatemalan government.

In a letter to the NGO organizers, the government said it could not approve the event with Ramazzini – a high-profile campaigner on poverty issues – for security reasons.

Ramazzini was angered by the excuse. “Personally, I don’t believe that I am a security threat,” he told Emerging Markets in a phone interview from San Marcos.

“It would have been much better if the government had said that I had nothing relevant to add to a meeting about high finance. Instead, they raise the security question as a way to stop whatever they don’t like.”

He said his exclusion is even more surprising given the ubiquitous theme of the IDB’s Guatemala meeting: “That no one is left behind.”

The organizers of the seminar that would have included Ramazzini were also surprised by the decision. They said that they followed the regulations and provided the government and the IDB with the names

of participants and themes of the presentation.

“I think they cancelled, because they knew that Bishop Ramazzini and the indigenous representatives were going to contradict directly what the IDB has been saying these past few days,” said Paulina Novo, of the Bank Information Center.

Ramazzini said he was “disappointed” that the IDB appeared to have condoned the exclusion. The IDB said that NGO visitors had been accredited for events on previous days, but that yesterday passes had been refused across the board.

Civil society groups have been attending the IDB’s annual meetings for years, pointing out that macro-economic improvements have not trickled down to the poor majorities – something even most governments acknowledge and are actively trying to address.

Ramazzini said that he had planned to talk about the fact that the government is touting 5% GDP growth, while conditions in the countryside deteriorate for the indigenous majority.

“I don’t get how there is macro-economic growth and people are poorer. Something is wrong,” he said.

Guatemalan activists also question the government’s tax policies and plans to attract foreign investment, which go hand-in-hand.

by Lucien Chauvin for Emerging Markets.

STRENGTHENING OF BELIZE’S MULTI-SECTORAL RESPONSE TO HIV AND AIDS

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION OFFICER

The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will be responsible to ensure the collection and analysis of HIV data, information and indicators, critical to the monitoring of the national and local response to HIV and AIDS in Belize, with particular emphasis on the project entitled “**Strengthening of Belize’s Multi-Sectoral Response to HIV/AIDS**”. The individual, under the supervision of the Director of the National AIDS Program will provide support to the National AIDS Programme (NAP), of the Ministry of Health (MOH), for the monitoring and evaluation of the Global Fund indicators so as to ensure the successful implementation of the project.

The Monitoring and Evaluation Officer will be supervised by and will report to the Director of the National AIDS Programme in the MOH.

Responsibilities:

The specific responsibilities:

1. Monitor all those specific indicators set out in the contract agreements between the Principal Recipient, the Global Fund and the Ministry of Health and any other entity relevant to the project;
2. Contribute to the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Unit for HIV/AIDS within the Ministry of Health;
3. Manage national data to facilitate the monitoring of indicators for Global Fund, National Strategic Plan, UNGASS, MDGs, etc;
4. Contribute with the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry to develop and disseminate, the quarterly National Epidemiological Surveillance report and assist with the maintenance of an institutional profile of HIV/AIDS in Belize;
5. Liaise with the Secretariat of the National AIDS Commission, the Epidemiology Unit of the Ministry of Health, the Central Statistical Office, and any other agency, as appropriate, to ensure that current information and indicators to monitor the country’s performance of the national HIV and AIDS response are available;
6. Produce monthly, quarterly and annual reports that analyse the achievement of the goals/objectives of the National AIDS Programme-Global Fund project;
7. Organize and facilitate capacity building programmes, courses or hands-on sessions for the Ministry of Health and implementation partners as it pertains to M&E activities;
8. Assist the Ministry of Health and other partners in the strategic use of data and information so as to improve the implementation of the GF project;
9. Assist with other duties or assignments consistent with the job description outlined above.

Qualifications:

- v A first degree in a Statistics, Epidemiology, Sociology, Public Health or a related discipline
- v At least four (4) years of experience in handling Biostatistics and/or Monitoring/Evaluation Programmes
- v An understanding of the socio-economic, cultural and political causes of HIV and AIDS and its impacts on the health and development of Belize;
- v A strong analytical, report writing and interpersonal skills; and
- v A commitment to a participatory team approach in all Global Fund Activities.

Remuneration:

Salary and benefits are negotiable, based on qualifications and experience.

Contact:

Applicants are required to submit two copies of Curriculum Vitae along with two (2) references in a sealed envelope on or by **4 pm April20th, 2007** to:

Chief Executive Officer,
Ministry of Health, Local Government, Transport and Communications,
3rd Floor, East Block Building, Independence Plaza,
Belmopan.

Colorado court swats mosquito lawsuit

Three prisoners serving potential life sentences in Colorado say their lives have been threatened - by mosquitoes.

The inmates at Walsenburg and Limon prisons sued, saying they were at risk of contacting West Nile virus or other diseases after they were bitten repeatedly by mosquitoes and suffered “the emotional and mental distress of

whether or not each mosquito’s bite would result in death or serious bodily injury.”

Stephen G. Glover, Alan Smith and Michael Freeman said the bites caused high fever, headache, neck stiffness and muscle weakness.

“Each attack constituted bodily injury, which the (Department of Cor-

rections) had the power to prevent, but consciously elected not to,” wrote the inmates, acting as their own attorneys.

But the Colorado Court of Appeals swat down their case and upheld a lower court’s decision to throw their

case out.

Prison officials said no confirmed cases of West Nile virus have ever been found in the prison population, and inmates are provided mosquito repellent.

Social Page



Cuban Ambassador H.E. Eugenio Martinez and his wife Johanna Martinez, with Film showcase organizer Suzette Zayden (center).

The first Traveling Caribbean Film opened April 11th with a ceremony and cocktail party at the Bliss Centre for the Performing Arts. Two films, “JAB; Blue Devils of Parmin” from Trinidad and tobago and “Zulaika” from Curacao opened the showcase which ran almost a full week until the 17th.

It featured films from all over the Caribbean in English, Spanish, French and French Creole. While most productions were from the last decade, the Jamaican classic “The Harder They Come,” with reggae star Jimmy Cliff was also included. Only one documentary from

Belize, “The Day of the Dead” from the Simply Belize television series made the playlist.

The Traveling Showcase’s visit to Belize was made possible through the support of UNESCO, the Embassy of Cuba in Belize and the National Institute of Culture and History, NICH, and local organizer Suzetter Zayden of Fer de Lance Productions. Ms Zayden is an independent producer and the driving force behind the Belize International Film Festival which will be held biannually instead of annually alternating with the Caribbean Traveling Showcase.

Bearing Fruits

☞ (Continued From Page 4)

Is it any wonder pregnant women crave mangos? As rich with life as they are, as beautiful and rounded at the bottom half like the female form when she is carrying a child. How many women are even now wanting mangos and not quite sure why? Or knowing, because it happened before...

Do you like the slippers, black mango, nine eleven, common mango or Hayden? Are you willing to lose a good portion of your allotted time in the conversation to eat one in front of other people, and not be able to speak either because your mind is too distracted by the burst of joy in your mouth, or your teeth tethered together by

stringy fibers? Maybe you have to raise your hand to cover your lips until you are sure you have gotten all the little bits out. Or do you go and hide in the yard or on the veranda and eat it alone, in order not to offend or become embarrassed should you stain your shirt?

That is the only bad part about eating a mango, getting out the evidence.

Ah, but the trouble is worth it, is it not? And don’t we all pity those poor Belizeans living away who cannot get the first mango of the season at all?

Yes we do. Go enjoy your canned pineapple and fruit cocktail from Winn Dixie.

We got mangos coming, four for a dolla, or just falling off the trees for nothing...don’t you wish you were here?

Full Service Airline
With over 180 daily
scheduled flights
throughout Belize
and Flores in
Guatemala

Charters also available

TROPIC AIR
The Airline of Belize

Reservations: 523-3410
reservations@tropicalair.com
www.tropicalair.com

Mangroves - Protecting Belize, but are we protecting them?

Naturalist/photographer Christian Ziegler has spent hours capturing the beauty of mangroves, trees many of us take for granted. Despite the fact that they provide much needed protection from hurricanes and erosion, as well as function as a nursery for many species of fish and a home to birds and other



This brown egrets survives by feeding on the fish it catches among the mangrove roots.

wildlife, irresponsible land developers cut them down exposing the land to disaster in many parts of Belize, particularly the Placencia Penninsula.

Independent Weekly is pleased to share some of Zeigler’s work with our readers and we thank him for giving us permission to publish them.



Christian Ziegler and researcher Anke Sparmann



The stilt-like roots of the mangrove help retain the shoreline from washing away.



Belizeans may have later cause to regret the ill-conceived burning of mangroves for land clearing by farmers and other land developers.



The mangrove is a hardy plant tolerant of high salt concentrations which can establish itself in the shoals of the reef. When this single plant grows into a clump, the combined tangle of roots will retain sand to begin the formation of a tiny island.



These zebra-striped juvenile spade fish blend in with the lights and shadows among the roots of the mangroves along the shore.

1/2 acre lots in Burrel Boom starting at \$10K Call 600-1627 for details	70 acres in Burrel Boom for US\$50K Call 600-1627 for details	Single-12 acre plot in Ladyville \$120 K Call 600-1627 for details
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the SOVEREIGN GUARANTEE

OMBUDSMAN says he has seen the guarantee!
"a privileged document!"

NOT convinced!

Dr. Carla Barnett (Financial Secretary):

"I am unable to provide a copy of the said guarantee because we do not have a copy of such a guarantee..."

Senator Godwin Hulse told the Senate

There is a DFC GUARANTEE but not a GOB GUARANTEE!

ACB: *"It really beggs the question why would such a statement would have been made publicly that there is such a guarantee..."*

JUST SHOW WI! UDP SAYS

Universal Health Services

- \$17million ballooned to \$32million + DFC 12 = \$44million
- Government wants to swap land...
- Belize Bank is in urgency, carrying around an expensive & non performing loan.