

The Independent

Reformer for the People

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Cat's outta di Bag

By: Meb Cutlack

Finally the truth about the Universal Health Services loan is surfacing and it could rock the PUP boat so much that it could sink.

Opposition leader Dean Barrow put the first large holes in the story of the UHS loan - and that was just the beginning of the collapse of all public trust in the Prime Minister's version of what went on and when.

If all it needed than was a broadside assault to hole the PUP ship to the waterline and PUP's own Minister of National Development Mark Espat delivered the attack.

Minister Mark Espat, who was also the point man on the recent debt restructuring in early December 2004, said that there was **no** discussion of the issue in



Opposition leader Dean Barrow

Cabinet. He told News Five that at that time he was not aware of any loan guarantee for U.H.S. and if he had known, he would have opposed it. Espat added that he believes there should now be a

legal review of the guarantee document to see if it is in fact enforceable by the Belize Bank. He is also calling for a financial audit of U.H.S. to see exactly where all those millions of dollars in loan funds were spent.

Senator Godwin Hulse fired the next salvo at the listing PUP ship.

He told Channel 5: "It's atrocious. I mean it's just absolutely outrageous to my mind. I cannot see how any, any government and particularly the Prime Minister, as the chief leader of the nation if you like and the chief custodian if you like of the assets of the people, could ever pen a document of that nature."

He explained he had picked out a number of clauses to dispute the PM's story: "First of all, the guarantee is open ended: there is no limit to it. I mean, it is any amount that the bank determines is owed at any time by Universal; that is the first ridiculous thing. The second thing is it is not in substitution to the D.F.C. guarantee and other collateral, it is in addition to, it is in addition to. Thirdly, the bank does not have to exhaust any of its other assets, any efforts



Minister Mark Espat

to collect on any of the assets; it goes straight to the guarantee. And fourth, any amount, any account that the bank said is owed is what the government is bound to. Please man, how could we ever do something like that? ..."

He added to Channel 5: "Well, I think that two things should happen. I think that each and every elected representative in that House should stand up and give their statement on this guarantee. And I want - and this is very important - I would want to hear each and every (Please Turn To Page 3) ■■■➡

3 more Cabinet Ministers condemn UHS Guarantee



Minister Cordel Hyde

From www.7newsbelize.com

The possibility of a governance crisis is deepening for the Prime Minister. Three more Ministers, who are also members of the Public Finance Committee have come forward to say they knew nothing of the Prime Minister's December 2004 guarantee.

This morning, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Eamon Courtenay was very direct. We asked him if he knew about the guarantee, he said, "*absolutely not.*" We then asked him, if he had known, would he have supported it in Cabinet. His reply was again, "*absolutely not.*"

Courtenay added that as far as a strategy to move forward, government first has to satisfy itself that the guar-



Minister Jose Coye

antee was legal and if it was not, then government as guarantor is excused from liability. He added though that if it does turn out that government is liable, it must then enter into negotiations to pay over a period of time.

But Courtenay says that before that happens, there needs to be a full discussion in Cabinet with full disclosure and, "*if government has to pay it needs to be approved by Cabinet and taken to the National Assembly.*"

Health Minister Jose Coye was not so direct or expansive - but he did also disavow knowledge of the signing. Speaking with us this afternoon, he said that, "*at the time of the sign-* (Please Turn To Page 16) ■■■➡

Belize at the OAS



Belize's Representative to the Organization of American States, Ambassador Lisa Marie Shoman, congratulates the Venezuelan Ambassador/Vice Minister Ambassador Jorge Valero in taking over the Chair of the OAS' Permanent Council on April 4, 2007.

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Design/Layout

William G. Ysaguirre

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Company Ltd.

P.O. Box 2666

Telephones:

(501) 225-3520

Email:

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

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Why the PUP should win again

Dear Editor,

I know it won't be popular, but I would like to propose that we the people of Belize vote the People's United Party back into power come next election.

Why you may ask? Well, so that they can fix the utter mess that they have created. A little child will keep doing the same thing until they are punished, and if we change parties, then the best that can happen will be for the UDP to right the ship and let the PUP off the hook, unpunished, free to plan another reaping in years to come.

However, should we have courage and put the PUP back in then they will be forced to fix the problem, face the music or else risk going down in history as the people who led our country astray. They will be held accountable for their actions.

The UDP promise investigations. POINTLESS. The VIP promise prosecutions. USELESS. Everyone clamours for heads in jail. THAT WILL NEVER HAPPEN. The politicians will only answer to one thing, their legacy. In the end, what they leave as history attached to their name is the only consequence they understand.

The money they steal can buy good lawyers, the laws they create, gives them ways out, but they cannot get around their reputation. That precedes them and will live on in their legacy.

I will also go out on a limb, a very strong limb and say that that the UDP have A LOT of bad mangoes in the barrel too, and for sure the whole lot will soon sour. It is already a simmering soup in the dry season heat. We already see conflicts of interest PUP style all the way at the top, and they are not even in

power yet. Will we be replacing rotten apples with rotten mangoes? Surely this is not out of the realm of possibility

The UDP is a party that is so desperate for power that I venture to say, will get in and do the very same thing its brethren from across the aisle are doing now, satisfying cronies and political flunkies who have wallowed for years. It will be their chance to drink at the trough of taxpayer money, while the PUP sit back and enjoy their spoils.

We are a country built on piracy you know, and piracy is still in our blood, but perhaps once someone is finally held accountable and walks the plank of history, only then can we truly move on as a country. Our time is coming soon, choose your vote wisely

Anthony Hunt

Teachers PSE results revisited

Dear Editor,

I would like to express my thoughts about a recent incident pertaining to the primary school examinations taken by Standard six teachers.

I am well aware of the ministry's responsibility to insure that the teachers are well equipped with the knowledge and skills to prepare standard six students for the primary school examinations.


For many years the performance of standard 6 students on the primary school examination has been less than desirable. The Ministry of Education, along with principals and teachers, has an obligation to turn the performance of standard six Students around. I applaud the ministry's effort to do something about the current situation. However, I wonder if the recent case when Standard Six teachers were made to sit the primary school examinations and the results released to the public was done

appropriately. There were several discrepancies as will be discussed.

1. Standard six teachers were invited to attend a workshop. Many arrived expecting to participate in professional development but were tricked into taking an exam. They were not emotionally or mentally prepared for such an exam and this quite possibly affected their low performance on the exam. Therefore, the low result should not be a surprise.

2. Only standard six teachers were invited and the ministry in its "Measuring Up Report" prepared by Yvonne Davis has mandated training for standard six teachers. This is implying that only standard six teachers are responsible for the performance of students on the primary school examinations. Are we to ignore then that the preparation of students for the primary school examination began in the infants with the teaching of the basics? Are we to ignore also that every teacher in the primary school has a role to play in the children's preparations? And are we to ignore that the standard six teacher only has the students for one year? Will training standard six teachers only adequately address the situation?

3. The release of the results of the primary school examination in my opinion, is unethical. The teachers were never given the option to not take the exam nor were they asked permission for the results to be released. The teachers were lied to as they were told the results of the exam would not be published. It is appropriate to implement policy changes within an organization; however, the results of a study should never be published without oral or written consent obtained from the participants of the study?

4. In my opinion, this was a great (Please Turn To Page 15) 

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independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com
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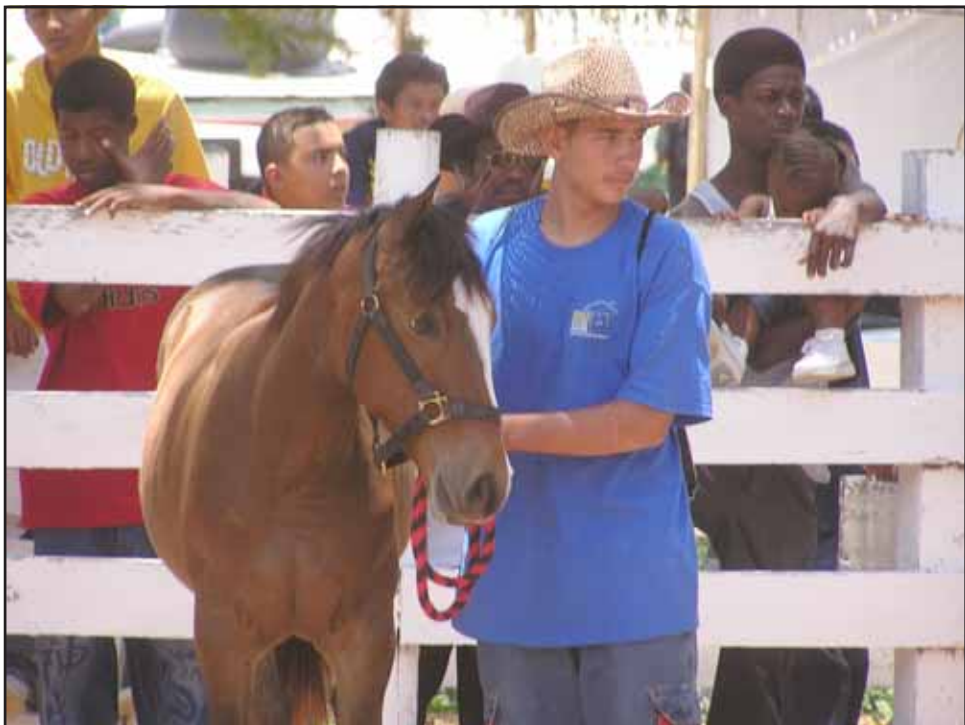
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Agric Show 2007 - hot as ever!



A young rancher waits his turn to show off his colt in the NATS livestock competition.



Ermenda Hernandez of Benque Viejo del Carmen won an Acros stove in the 1st Annual Love FM Love TV/ Acros cookout, with a vegetarian entree of Spanish rice, vegetable salad and papaya shake.



Young show-goers check out the widgets on sale .



Icy snow cones helped many beat the heat.

Cat is out of the Bag

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

representative saying I support this and I am prepared to expend the funds of the people to Belize to settle their debt, which has benefited us in no way, over and above spending it on the people of Belize and then going back to the people and asking them to be returned to Belmopan.

“I would want to see that. As far as I am concerned, I think the Prime Minister has perhaps lost the confidence of his Cabinet if he cannot get his Cabinet to support this document. And so far I don’t know if he has, I don’t know if they have even seen it and if they have they should say so.”

Deputy Prime Minister Johnny Briceno was the second minister of the Cabinet to distance himself from the guarantee. Briceno told his TV station CTV-3, Orange Walk:

"It was not a Cabinet decision and we were unaware of this guarantee that was given to Universal Health Services. It would be difficult for anyone to be able

to support an unlimited guarantee for a private sector loan and so certainly if I had known at that time, I would not have supported any unlimited guarantee to UHS."

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Hurry, hurry, get dey tamara

“Have a good weekend, but don’t drink too much,” said the pretty insurance agent as she told her client goodbye with a smile. He hesitated in the doorway, “No, no, I am not like that... I am responsible.” and he backed towards the door.

“Glad to hear that,” she smiled again and waved me forward for attention.

I was not sure her comment was part of Traffic Safety Awareness Week, but I figured it might be, especially when I sat down and saw all the pamphlets from the Belize Police Department on her desk. I had heard the insurance companies were joining the effort. I think that’s a good thing. Not only because they are directly affected by all the accidents in this country in terms of paying out benefits, but because their clients can be injured and killed. So it’s a good business and a good public relations move.

But I hope the traffic week is more than just PR. That some Belizeans are skeptical was clear from the calls to morning radio shows this past week. There was a certain we’ve-heard-this-all-before-nothing-is-really-going-to-change-or-get better-ism.

Especially following the public rela-

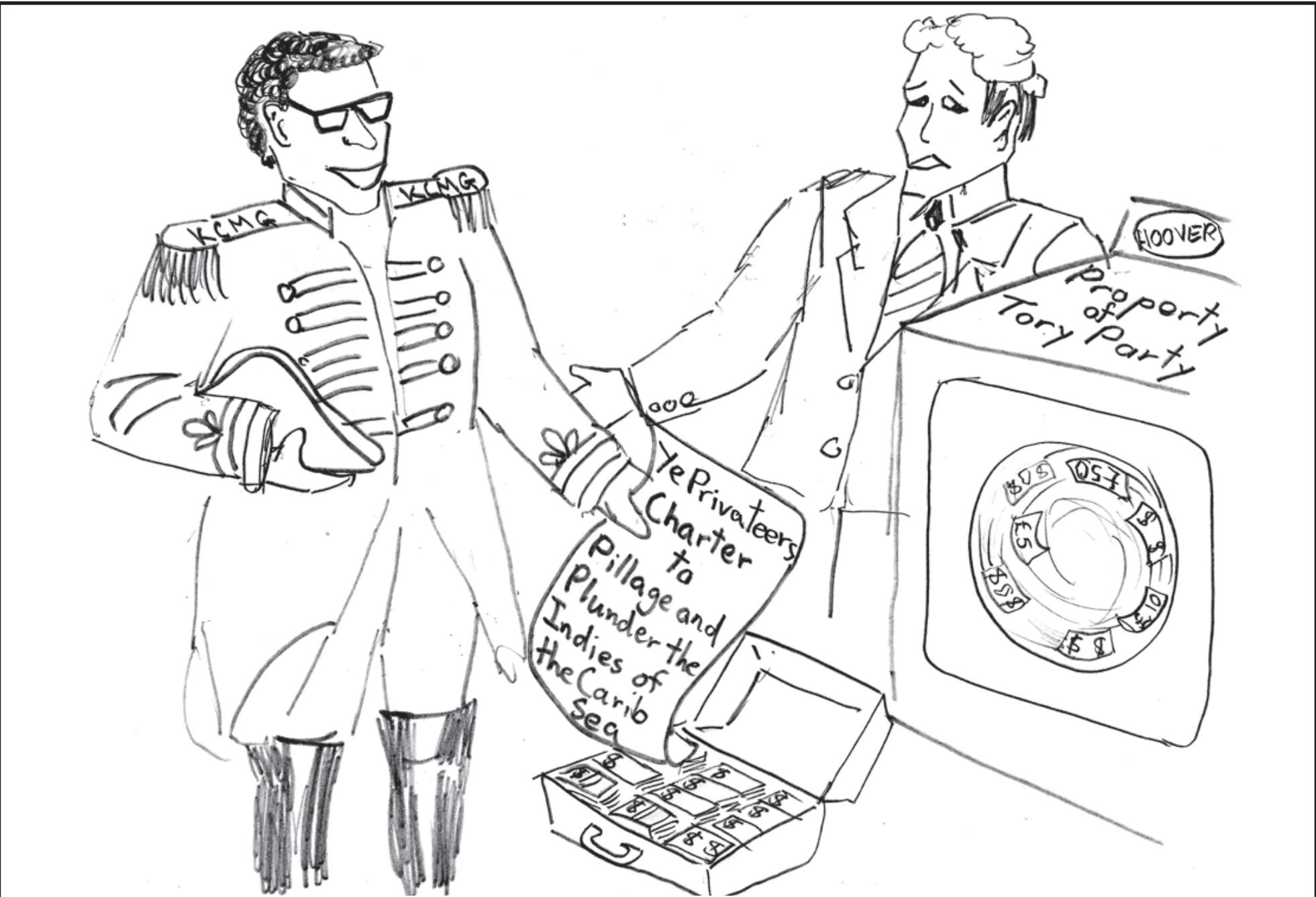


Braving the heat each day traffic officers try to keep things flowing smoothly in Belize City (Photo courtesy Richard Holder)

tions fiasco in court in which a Minister of State got off without so much as a suspended license or being ordered to attend alcoholics anonymous meetings after sending two children to the hospi-

tal. What a dishonorable mess. They blamed poor evidence gathering. If that is true, double shame. Triple shame on the hospital which refused the victims follow-up treatment while they

checked to see if the bill had been paid. This from the facility which got a guarantee from government to cover its own hard pay status. A secret guarantee, hid- (Please Turn To Page 13)



Here’s some more swag for your party coffers. Ever seen a million dollars in cash before? Thank you, m’lord, your contribution is not unwelcome, but it’s so hard to launder!

Whither Belize & her borders?



By: Trevor Vernon

I was sent to cover the presentations at the Signa L. Yorke lecture series Tuesday last, at the Holy Redeemer Parish Hall. The pamphlet said the topic was to be “The Implications of taking the Belize Guatemala Differendum to the International Court of Justice”. The panel presentations were to be by former Belize Ambassador & Scholar James Schofield Murphy, Godfrey Ash-Smith, and current Ambassador of Belize to Guatemala, Alfredo Martinez.

It was a poorly attended event. That was sad because the issue of the shifting borders ought to be of paramount importance to the people of Belize. You will recall that the Mexicans moved a marker (at Aguas Turbias?) during the Riechler/Ramphal era that saw us losing territory to Guatemala “because the new satellite technology (supposedly carried out by the Pan American institute of Geography and History-PAIGH) revealed that the older technology had our border in Guatemalan territory”. Then recently the Mexican Foreign Ministry announced that Mexico will be adjusting its border with

Belize in the Bay of Campeche. Another possible loss of National Territory for Belize. Belizean authorities have been mum and so has the leader of the opposition.

Apathy has been consuming the people of Belize to the extent that the time might be right for Musa to “camel trade” away our borders in working on his legacy. Media houses stayed away from the event except for the one carrying live coverage. I suppose they were paid for air time. The day after the event, no media house even reported on the panel presentation sponsored by the Junior College of SJC. One has to wonder why.

Okay, I’ll drop the titles herewith to deal with the issue.

Murphy’s presentation was factual, and very academic. No political slant was detected. No agenda. Just the facts, textbook style. But it was crisp & clear. In harsh contrast, Smith’s & Martinez’s had a spin: we must, we should, we ought to go to court now, the time is right; the Guatemalan natives are no longer restless.

The first obvious question is: why now? The second is why did Smith make a presentation when he is a former Foreign Minister, not the current one? Deniability? Is Smith still on the Negotiation Team and is it still headed by Senior Ambassador “con Rango Ministerial” currently on hiatus in London? At taxpayers’ expense.

The issue of the settlement of the claim

is where the rubber hits the road. Smith presented a quasi-legal, political rationale for going to court now, albeit halfheartedly. He promised his power point presentation would be available at his website: www.flashpointbelize.com so I won’t attempt to rehash his focal point which was that we should go to court, although it will cost us a couple million and that there are no guarantees. Neither can Guatemala’s feet be held to the fire with any ruling, even if they agreed to subject themselves to the jurisdiction of the ICJ. Ultimately for the Guatemalan Political Directorate, they must first seek the consent of the Guatemalan people through a national referendum or risk their Constitutional Court throwing out the Political Directorates’ wishes to resolve the issue by the ICJ’s ruling.

Martinez, on the other hand, with his folksy jokes and entertaining presentation argued that things are ripe in Guatemala for a settlement. Well, he didn’t exactly argue, he massaged the audience (and radio listeners, countrywide) into thinking that Guatemalans are ready, with the exception of a group of lawyers who want to see this thing dragged out so they (the constitutional lawyers) could continue making money from the differendum process. But aren’t they all, including the Belize NT, making hay in trying to force the Guatemalans to settle the claim? Millions has been spent since June, 2000, possibly more.

The questions stand then: why bother going to the ICJ if Guatemala does not

have to abide by any ruling, and why push it now? Nothing they said makes sense, by way of arguing for submitting us to the ICJ’s ruling.

Belize has had experience of going to the ICJ when they joined a group taking Israel to court over the legality of building a wall in Israel. That had sounded like an internal Israeli issue to me but Belize Foreign Ministry joined the legal action anyway. So maybe, just maybe, after having spend millions in that action, the Government of the man Said Musa feels comfortable in going to the ICJ, again.

Folks at the meeting told me privately to look for economic considerations--especially the Belize crude oil issue and the bilateral trade issue. I couldn’t find anything to substantiate that but maybe I am looking in the wrong places and it will become evident later, perhaps after Belize hosts the Trade Ministerial on May 12th. All I know is that the very public Smith/Martinez slant wasn’t very convincing.

Unless of course, they are simply adopting the usual pre-election “Tings di happen wid di claim” stance employed on BOTH sides of the border, every time the people go to the polls. But for now, it’s the polls going to the people in what appears to have been a mutually agreed strategy: “educate” your respective people and prepare them for the ICJ eventuality. It’s a done deal. Get use to it you unwashed masses, you; this ICJ thing is already cooked and curried.

Collin Williams, inspiring Seattle educator, dies at 73

Growing up in Belize, Collin Williams dreamed of an education, though his father believed he should forget school and get a job.

Finding few opportunities in his native country, Dr. Williams immigrated to the United States in 1953, and after a stint in the Army, settled in Seattle. He earned education degrees and became a Seattle School District principal and administrator, helping develop and later lead the African American Academy.

Throughout his career, Dr. Williams sought to encourage the underdog, enlighten the privileged and listen to all points of view. Known for his steady grace, Dr. Williams was involved in race relations during some of the tensest times in Seattle history and is remembered for inspiring the same love of learning he discovered as a boy.

Dr. Williams died Sunday of renal failure. He was 73.

In Belize, then called British Honduras, Dr. Williams did not feel judged by the color of his skin, but that quickly changed when he came to the United States. The Army classified him as Caucasian, not knowing what to make of a black man with a West Indian accent.



Collin Williams emigrated from Belize in 1953, then settled in Seattle.

“He thought that was ridiculous,” said his wife, Carole Williams.

He earned a high-school diploma from Seattle Central Community College and, some two decades later, an education doctorate from Seattle University in 1980. He married Carole in 1960, and they had two children, Collin and Teresa.

From 1967-69, he taught sixth grade at Harrison Elementary School, later renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Element-

tary School. Among his pupils was future Seattle City Councilmember Peter Steinbrueck.

“I count him as one of my most important mentors in my life,” Steinbrueck said. “He was an inspirational leader in turbulent times.”

Steinbrueck said he spoke with Dr. Williams through the years and visited him a few days before he died.

After a stint as principal at Madrona Elementary, Dr. Williams transferred to district headquarters in 1975, and eventually became assistant superintendent.

Much of his career was devoted to integrating schools. The district instituted mandatory busing in 1978, and Williams was instrumental in carrying out with the program. He retired in 1992 but came back as principal of the African American Academy from 1993 to 2000.

At the time, he was credited with helping a troubling school find its footing. “I don’t think anyone thought that a 100 percent black school could really make it. This school is making it,” he told The Seattle Times in 1999.

“He was happiest there,” Carole said. “Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn’t work, but there was a lot of pride.”

Rickie Malone, who served as vice principal of the African American Academy under Williams and now leads the school, said Dr. Williams was one of her “forever friends.”

“His way was to listen to everyone at the table,” Malone said. “The people who worked under him will remember him as a kind and gentle man.”

Symbolizing his importance to the school, its library is named after Dr. Williams, a fitting tribute to his passions, said his friends.

In addition to his wife and two children, Dr. Williams is survived by two grandchildren, three brothers and five sisters.

Services will be held at . Saturday at Bethel Christian Church, 200 24th Ave. South, in Seattle. A viewing will be held before the service, at Evergreen-Washelli Mortuary, 11111 Aurora Ave. N., Seattle.

Remembrances may be made to the Collin Williams Library, African American Academy, 8311 Beacon Ave. S., Seattle, WA 98118.

By Alex Fryer

Reprinted from the Seattle Times

Musa Government attempts to confiscate Private property

By: Cayo Correspondent

PUP Government is trying to seize and confiscate private property in Georgeville, Cayo District, Belize without paying compensation.

The (BNE) Belize Natural Energy Ltd has been authorized by Minister of Natural Resources to go onto six hundred (600) acres of land belonging to a private land owner without so much as paying to him one penny for its take over and use his land.

The land owner had offered to give permission to the BNE oil company to explore for petroleum on his land, subject to the condition that they pay to him reasonable compensation for using his land. The BNE company rejected that offer out of hand and immediately got in touch with the Honorable Mr. Briceno who not only sided with BNE company's position that no

reasonable compensation should be paid to the land owner, but within two (2) days of receiving the BNE oil company's complaint against the landowner issued a written order, requiring the land owner to allow the BNE oil company access to his land for the purpose of conducting petroleum operation thereon for two years!

This is land confiscation by the Musa Government and it puts all owners of private property in Belize on notice, which the PUP Government is prepared to seize and confiscate private property. This matter is heading for the Courts, but the very thought that a Government in this day and age would try to seize or confiscate private property is truly frightening and amazing!

See copy of letter at right:

Oil Exploration in Protected Areas worries management

Protected area managers from Toledo District are concerned about the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process that the Tunich-Nah Consultants and Engineering firm has begun in Block 19 in southern Belize. This EIA is for US Capital Energy's (USCE's) seismic testing, exploratory oil drilling and potential oil extraction activities in Block 19, which consists of a number of protected areas including Aguacaliente Wildlife Sanctuary, Golden Stream Corridor Preserve, Paynes Creek National Park, Rio Blanco National Park and the Sarstoon Temash National Park. The protected area managers are concerned about a number of issues including:

• The significant geographic scope of the EIA

Geographically the EIA applies to the whole project's concession of Block 19 which includes the area from Monkey River to the Sarstoon River and most of the villages and communities in Toledo including Punta Gorda Town.

• The fact that the EIA is for seismic testing, exploratory drilling and potential extraction activities

Not only is the geographical

scope huge, the approved Terms of Reference (TORs) state on page one that this is for "a complete EIA for the entire exploratory and potential extraction activities" (Approved TORs, June 26, 2006). Some sections of the TORs limit the scope of the EIA to seismic testing and exploratory drilling only, while other sections leave room for the EIA to include all activities involved in the proposed oil exploration and extraction project.

• The fact that the EIA developers have entered a protected area to begin their research without a permit from the Forest Department

They are also concerned that the company has not yet received a research permit from Forest Department as required by law to do this work in protected areas. On Friday March 30, 2007, a representative from the consulting firm visited SATIIM's office in Punta Gorda and informed the office staff that they would be entering the Sarstoon Temash National Park to do research for this EIA. When asked whether they had the research permit approved by the Forest Department to enter the park, required under the National Parks

ORDER UNDER SECTION 26 (1)

WHEREAS, under a Production Sharing Agreement dated 2 January 2003 between the Government of Belize ("the Government") and Belize Natural Energy Ltd. ("the Contractor"), the Contractor is authorized to conduct petroleum operations in Blocks 5B, 18, and parts of 15 and 6 ("the Area of Operations");

AND WHEREAS, Section 26(1) of the Petroleum Act, Chapter 225 of the Laws of Belize ("the Act") provides, *inter alia*, that a contractor shall not exercise any of his rights under a petroleum contract except with the written consent of the owner or lawful occupier thereof;

AND WHEREAS, the Proviso to the said Section 26(1)(b) further provides that where the consent of the owner or lawful occupier is withheld, if the Minister, on an application by the contractor and after hearing both parties, is satisfied that such consent is being unreasonably withheld, he may by Order direct the owner or lawful occupier to allow the contractor to conduct petroleum operations on the land on such terms and conditions and within such period as may be specified in the Order;

AND WHEREAS, the owner of a part of the Area of Operations, Mr. WAN-I HUANG of GEORGEVILLE VILLAGE, CAYO DISTRICT, BELIZE has withheld his consent for the carrying out of petroleum operations on his land by the Contractor;

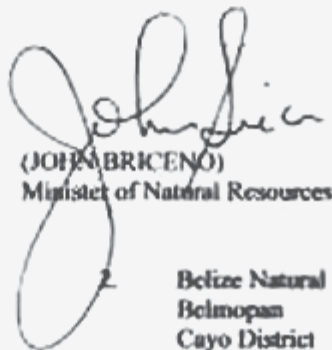
AND WHEREAS, on an application made to me by the Contractor, and after hearing both sides, I am satisfied that such consent is being unreasonably withheld by the said owner;

NOW THEREFORE, I, JOHN BRICENO, Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment, in exercise of the powers conferred upon me by the said section 26 (1)(b) of the Petroleum Act and all other powers thereunto me enabling, HEREBY DIRECT the said owner WAN I HUANG to allow the Contractor to conduct petroleum operations on the following parcels of land belonging to the said owner:

TCT Vol. 27 Folio 129, Plan Ref. Entry 1961 (120 acres)
TCT Vol. 27 Folio 157, Plan Ref. Entry 1993 (262.88 acres)
TCT Vol. 28 Folio 12, Plan Ref. Entry 1993 (120.04 acres)
TCT Vol. 29 Folio 145, Plan Ref. Entry 1918 (100.397 acres)

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that in carrying out petroleum operations, the Contractor shall exercise due care and avoid unnecessary damage to the land, and further that all exploration activity on the said land shall be completed within a period of two years from the date of this Order.

DATED this 5th day of April 2007


(JOHN BRICENO)
Minister of Natural Resources and the Environment

TO

1. Mr. Wan I Huang Georgeville Village Cayo District Belize	2. Belize Natural Energy Limited Belmopan Cayo District Belize
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System Act, they said that they did not need one. SATIIM's rangers and the Forest Department were notified of this situation and have been directed to escort them out of the park if they are unable to provide a copy of the permit.

Finally, Tunich-Nah Consultants and Engineering firm has an interesting history of conducting EIAs for large scale developments that are approved by the Department of Environment. Examples include the Challilo dam project, the Carnival Cruise Port project, and the Ara Macao resort in Placencia. At least two of these EIAs resulted in legal challenges in the Supreme Court of Belize because citizen groups were

not satisfied with the environmental research, scientific testing, analysis of impacts, and the lack of public consultation conducted, as required by the law.

We would like to call on all those concerned Belizeans to participate actively in any public consultation or public review process that takes place during this EIA. We look forward to working with the EIA developer to ensure that this is a highly transparent, fair, well analyzed, well documented and thorough assessment of all social and environmental impacts.

*Press release from
Aguacaliente Management Team,
Big Falls Village, Toledo District*

For an online version of the INdependent Reformer visit us at
<http://www.belizenorth.com/independentreformer.htm>

Labouring in Belize

By: Richard Harrison

Labor Day is celebrated in many countries around the world on May 1, each year. Lately, there has been a lot of news about union related issues....and about minimum wage...and about labour force surveys. BUT....has anyone asked the Belizean worker what he seeks....why he gets up and go to sweat every day? If the workers needs and desires are well understood, have they been prioritized according to his wishes? If so, are there any efforts to respond to those needs and desires?

1. WHY WORK?

The reason for work may vary from person to person. However, one can hardly disagree that a common reason for work is to provide for one’s basic necessities. At a lower level, this might mean to earn food for the family, to pay rent or mortgage, utility bills, school and medical bills, and for buying clothing. At a medium level, this might mean buying perfumes and lotions, keeping a pet, taking an occasional vacation, paying for cable television and telephone in the home, wearing branded clothing and saving in a credit union. At a higher level, this might mean fixed-saving in a commercial bank, investing in expansion for a guest room in the home, purchasing a brand new SUV without credit, taking annual medical check ups abroad, traveling abroad for shopping, and vacationing multiple times per year at exotic tourist destinations around the world.

Of course these are mostly material, and it is well documented that persons don’t work only for material things. Many choose a profession for its image. A job selling insurance door to door might have the potential of earning more than a bank teller, but many people prefer the image of working at the bank that comes from the uniforms, the air-conditioned office, the neck tie, etc.

Others work out of devotion. Many teachers, nurses and policemen in the past used to work out of devotion. People like Ms. Rosalia Bejos, Mrs. Elda Salazar, they used to teach as a devotion. Doing a good job for our children and society was more important to them than the income or benefits that they earned personally. Yet others say they work for self-fulfillment. Some artists and musicians work to see and enjoy the end result of their art or composition, even if it barely pays the bills. Others work voluntarily because giving makes them ‘feel’ good. In short, the reason for work may vary from person to person.

2. SAVINGS

At our annual end-of-year party in

2006, I had a conversation with one of my young workers. He is a really good person and works conscientiously and to my satisfaction. I asked him if he was seeing headway in his personal affairs as a result of his work with my company. He told me quite assuredly, that he definitely was seeing his headway and that he was very grateful for the job. He said he pays the utility bills in his home, and shares some of the food bills as well...and he even has money left to keep a cell phone, to treat his girl, and to socialize with his friends. I asked him if he is saving any money. He said no....although he has tried to...he always ends up finding something to spend his savings on.

How important is saving to the worker in Belize?

I gave each of my workers a \$10 per week raise to start this year off. However, they do not get this in cash. They get a saving certificate bearing 8% per annum interest, which my company will pay them at the time they choose to redeem their certificates. I have advised them to not redeem their certificates until such time as they are in dire need, such as medical emergencies, family difficulties or to make an investment in their home or education. They are quite happy with this arrangement, and with the fact that they are weekly seeing their SAVINGS pile up, where before there was none.

Like most of my small ideas and dreams, I am hoping that I will be able to encourage other companies to join and help me to formalize a Workers Bank of Belize at some point in the not-too-distant future; which would facilitate our workers with low-interest-rate home mortgages, and pay them a relatively high rate of interest for their savings. This bank would be owned by the workers who become shareholders by committing a portion of their earnings to this bank in the form of savings. Only shareholders would be eligible to make home-loans from the bank, and the Board of Directors would be elected from among the shareholders, which are the participating workers themselves. The power that capital generation can play in the lives of our workers is well known, even while we recognize the black-eye that such projects have been given by fly-by-night schemes which sought only to usurp workers funds. But, the black-eye that scam housing projects created does not eliminate the need for housing. Workers need to learn from those experiences, and make more and better efforts at involving themselves in the highest level of decision making and oversight regarding the use of their funds.

Saving in Belize is not easy. But saving is a very important aspect of improv-

ing ones conditions.

3. WORKING HOURS

What do working hours have to do with what workers seek from their sweat? At one time, Belizeans used to work from 8am to 4pm.....Monday to Friday...and half-day Saturday. Then sometime in the 1980’s, we bought into the five-day work week as practiced in the industrialized countries. We now work up to 5pm each day. These days most workers are packed into dilapidated buses trying to reach home between 5pm and the time it gets dark. The sporting fields and public parks are no longer packed the way they used to be. Of course this has a lot to do with the general lack of safety and security; however, it may also be as a result of less daylight hours available to most working persons. Since the respectable working persons don’t frequent these places anymore, the riff-raff have taken control of these public places, resulting in even greater insecurity, especially for the children who must go there to face temptation to drugs and other indiscrete behaviour. Is this what Belizean workers want from their labour?

Belize does not practice daylight saving time. These days the sun rise before 5am....and it is very hot by 7am. The sun sets at around 6:30pm. Is this 8am – 5 pm practical for Belize, given the tropical climate that prevails here? Are these the hours where we can get the highest productivity from our labour?

It is well known that worker productivity can increase if the cooler hours are used for productive labor. Is productivity related in any way to the amount that employers can pay employees for their labour? In parts of North America and Europe, the sun rises at 6:30am and sets at 10pm. That is why they set 9am to 5pm as normal office hours.

Belize needs to rationalize its own hours for work, and not follow blindly the industrialized countries in the north which enjoy different daylight hours. We should try to use more of the morning cool hours to increase productivity, and we should try to get more daylight hours after work, so that families can enjoy the parks and playgrounds, do gardening and other household chores on their own instead of paying for it, supervise their children during more of their awake hours, and perhaps take up hobbies....all of which reduce stress and can improve workers standard of living.

4. MINIMUM WAGE

The concept of a minimum wage assumes that capital is there to exploit labour. By setting a minimum wage of BZ\$3 per hour....a worker stands to earn a minimum of BZ\$135 per 45-hour work week. Can a family live in Belize on this amount? Perhaps the wife would have to go to work as well....so the family could then earn a total of (Please Turn To Page 8)



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Current Issues

Time for New Tax Regime

By: Meb Cutlack

A country is only as rich as the internal movement of its people, goods and services. The economy of Belize is rapidly coming to a grinding halt as increasing taxes stifle investment, endeavor and internal production. Such taxes also mean the more expensive flow of goods and services throughout the country and the ultimate decline of local products and internal trade.

Already, in just the last two years, there has been a noticeable decline in traffick between Belize City and the north and also a similar decline in traffic to the west and south.

But there has been an increase in illicit trafficking. The daily illegal importation of goods through our porous borders deprives the government of millions of dollars in tax every year (as the 'grey' economy flourishes) - and it also institutes a 'lawless' but justifiable, sense of righteous 'cheating' in Belizeans.

The gross annual imports into Belize for 2006 will add up to somewhere in the region of \$1,500,000,000 or \$2,000,000,000. - yes, up to two billion dollars.

A 40% tax on all imports, with exception of medical and school supplies (and some other exceptions) could raise a total revenue for the Government of

Belize of up to \$800,000,000 and dramatically drop the price of many goods on the Belize market including fuel, oil and butane.

A 5% only tax (value added tax) applied to all local goods and services would stimulate the production of local versus foreign goods and services. This 5% tax would also be levied on water, telecommunications and electricity and drop the price of these items while stimulating local efforts, production and investment.

To do away with the GST and the hotel bed tax and replace it with the local 5% tax would allow the tourism industry to breath again and not choke as it is now on ever increasing taxes. This could, almost overnight, double government tourism revenue.

The drop to 40% (or even make it 50%) tax on all oil and gas products would more than halve the present price of gas on the market. This would lead to the immediate stimulation of local market activity and production.

While imported gasoline etc., would still be handled by Esso, private importation of refined gasoline and oil products from neighbouring countries would be allowed - if necessary - at a 45% to 50% tax level.

Today in Belize there is a massive

'leakage' of customs revenue through, often selectively, lax law enforcement. This means certain 'crony' wholesalers and other importers get away with financial murder while honest importers are financially jeopardised.

To cure this situation a whole new regime of investigation and punishment needs to be established. Government officers found with their hands in the 'cookie jar' would have to be dismissed and punished rather than just slapped on the wrists - as at present.

All the above could be subject to 'case necessary' adjustment. The tourism industry, for example, could be allowed duty exemption (or repayment) on all good and services not obtainable in Belize. This would particularly apply to quality good and services unavailable in Belize such as certain foods, wine and advertising services etc., which the industry needs to remain competitive.

All imported goods into Belize could easily and inexpensively carry an import invoice number which could be checked at any time by customers or the authorities.

Other exceptions or adjustments might be necessary because of Belize's membership of CARICOM and existing trade with other Latin American countries through existing trade agreements.

As far as the rest of the world is concerned, actual investigation of import/export status would almost certainly ascertain that many of our imports from these countries ultimately already carry more than a 40% tax - before they get to the customer. Therefore the new tax regime would actually benefit many overseas goods suppliers and lead to a more open and visible import trail.

The government should also phase out monopolies on all goods and services. Such monopolies (Fortis, Belikin, BTL,) exploit and cripple the nation

I offer this only as a discussion document. Belize is at the end of its tether tax wise and the daily burden of multiple taxes, as passed on now to the ordinary consumer, has reached a point almost beyond bearing. Continuing as we are can only lead to a drastic economic slowdown and eventual economic collapse.

A dramatic revision and simplification to existing customs duties would be of immediate benefit to our country and its citizens. It could do away with the present complicated Customs system whereby goods can carry anything from a 10% to an 80% duty rate, which allows extraordinary 'leverage' to individual Customs officers - particularly dishonest ones.

Labouring in Belize

➡ (Continued From Page 7)

BZ\$270 per week. Can they live on this amount, given that now they will have to pay baby-sitter or daycare, and transportation to and from? So, perhaps they will likely have to take the elder children away from high-school, so that they can work to earn income.....so that they can afford to send the second and third child to school. Hmmm....what happens if the second is not the best in academics? Oh my...now we have trouble on our hands. Many first-born in our homes are suffering this fate.

My educated guess is that unskilled and semi-skilled labor in Belize needs to earn around BZ\$200 per week to be able to provide for a life with access to what is considered basic needs.

So, how can this be achieved? Is the worker willing and able to produce what it takes to earn this amount? Who would determine what each worker needs to produce to earn this amount?

I guess that my argument would be that a minimum wage does much to drive the lowest end a worker could

enjoy....but it does very little to drive the worker along a path of productivity that would help him meet with his objectives for getting up and going to work. It should be enhanced by a programme aimed at both workers and employers, to spur productivity in Belize, which helps both workers and employers to understand how to measure productivity and what means can be used to reward its increase.

5. EMPLOYMENT

Over the next ten years, 69,000 persons will reach the age of 20, according to CSO. This would mean that Belize has to generate an average of 6,900 new jobs every year for the next 10 years, in order to keep the list of unemployed from ballooning. The escape gate to the USA, that was there in the past, is fast closing; and Cuba and Venezuela seem more interested in sending their people here, than providing work for our people in their own countries. This is the greatest challenge that faces our country in terms of labour, and requires we work a lot more earnestly and closely to make sure we do not al-

low this monster; which is steering us in the face, to consume us and our desired way of life.

6. MARCHING

Belize seems to have developed a fad for marching and radio talk-shows. So don't be surprised if you see people, especially our children, marching again on Labour Day. In more democratic countries, community leaders pay attention to marches and demonstrations, they read the billboards and placards calling for change. I am not quite sure we enjoy this level of democracy in Belize. Marches don't seem to have the impact desired by those who march, and most of it is inspired by special interest groups who are propelled into action by foreign donor grants and the impulse to rally for more of the same.

More concrete action taken by groups such as the Association of Concerned Belizeans, Commissions of Inquiry, and by individuals such as Senator Godwin Hulse, seem to be making a difference in the arena of politics and public affairs, and needs our congratulations and recognition on this labor day. They

strengthen our democracy and inspire us to become a more vigilant society which values and safeguards its constitutional rights and responsibilities.

In the 2006 Independence Day celebrations, the politics was mostly removed from the celebrations, and the massive public participation and community spirit in the country-wide events was astounding to say the least. We should learn from that experience.

In the years leading up to 1998, the Baron Bliss Day celebrations were inspiring less public events and participation each year. It was just another holiday for people to stay home from work and school. Then the La Ruta Maya Belize River Challenge was conceived, and the public responded with outpouring of national support for an event that put the Baron Bliss Day celebrations back into high gear.

One wonders if the Labour Day Celebrations does not need a similar injection of new life, with a nation-wide event that inspires similar multitudes of citizens acknowledging the work and workers of Belize?

By Definition



By: William Schmidt
PG correspondent for
INdependent Weekly

Several months ago Belize celebrated water day. I felt it was a good reason to visit with the mayor and other local leaders to talk about the importance of protecting the presently endangered watershed for Punta Gorda Town.

I spent several minutes (15 to 20) talking with at least 6 or 7 people. I noted that the Cerro Hills behind town was the principle watershed for town and that the Water Department pumped the water for town from the aquifer at the foot of the hills.

The last time I visited the area, it was apparent the farmers were moving their farms from the base of the hills up the sides and there were some cattle pastures where most of the trees had been cut down. A large number of small saplings had been cut to provide reinforcement for the growing number of new concrete second story floors and beams that we see all over town. Some Emery trees that had been cut for lumber and there were more trails then I had seen on my last visit.

Unless this watershed was protected the aquifer could go dry and Punta Gorda Town would experience a lack of water like was happening across the Bay in Honduras and in Cuba. The quality and availability of water would go down and the cost of water would probably go up.

Later on in the afternoon a friend came by to visit me. He asked, “whats wrong, you look down.” I told him of all the people I spoke to, not one showed any real interest or asked what could be done to protect the watershed. He replied “perhaps they didn’t know what you’re talking about.” So I asked him “Do you know what a watershed or aquifer is?” and he answered quite honestly, “To tell you the truth, I don’t.”

In the natural forest the rain falls on the leaves and branches of the trees and this allows it to slowly drip down to the forest floor. Where the fallen leaves have created a covering that absorbs and holds the water which gives it a chance to soak into the

ground and filtered down into the porous limestone below called the aquifer. There it is stored waiting to be pumped out to supply the town.

When the trees are all cut down and the watershed destroyed, the leaves no longer fall to cover the ground, and the rain beats down on the unprotected earth. It compacts it and makes it hard, while it washes away the fragile topsoil. The water doesn’t have a chance to soak in. When the topsoil erodes down the hill it runs into streams and eventually into Joe Taylor Creek.

On the way it clogs up and pollutes the aquifer. It goes on to cause silt and sedimentation to pollute the creek, making it difficult or impossible for the fish and other animals that require clean water to live. My friend said, “Now I see why you are so concerned about saving the trees on Cerro Hills, its important because its how our town gets water.”

This incident reminded me of the time two British students asked me to look at a survey questionnaire they wanted to give the rural villagers. I went over it and underlined almost one-third of the words telling them “I didn’t think the villagers would understand these, you will have to break these down into smaller change.”

After they left I asked myself if I was following my own advice. Pretty soon a villager came by to visit, and we sat on a bench beneath a tree. I asked him, “Sam, you know how I have often told you about the Eco Park Plan that our groups have been developing?” “Yes”, he replied. “Tell me, what does the word park mean to you”? I waited for what seemed

like a long time, but I know how thoughtful many villagers are, they don’t just say anything that comes into their minds, they like to think before they speak.

After what I thought was long enough I said “you must have some idea after all our conversations, don’t be afraid, tell me, what does the word park mean to you”? He looked at me with such an innocent expression and asked, “You mean like we de park here?” Remembering this I went back to the people I had spoken to earlier about the need to protect the town’s watershed and aquifer and sure enough, only one or two could tell me what a watershed is and no one knew what an aquifer is. With this, I realized that when I talk and write about the comprehensive, sustainable, wholistic, integrated, diversified Eco Park, I had better be sure those interested actually know what these words mean. I close this article with some definitions.

Wholistic; the full or complete amount, all parts or members. With no part removed or left out. Complete system made up of parts on the whole

considering everything.

Wholism; the theory that wholes are greater than the sum of their parts, planning for the whole district rather than just parts of the district.

Sustainable; support, keep alive, keep going continuously.

Integrate; necessary in order to make something complete, to bring people of all social classes, races, Maya, East Indian, Creoles, Mestizo, Garifuna, religions, others, etcetera together as equals in society, combined or form a part or parts into a whole, bring or come into equal membership of a community.

Diverse; of various sorts, diversify, increase the variety of.

Eco; combining form, relating to ecology.

Ecology; and environment, the scientific study of living things in relation to each other and to their environment.

All of these words help to identify and explain the Toledo People’s Eco Park Plan. It is really an eco industrial park. Eco standing for economic development with ecological integrity.



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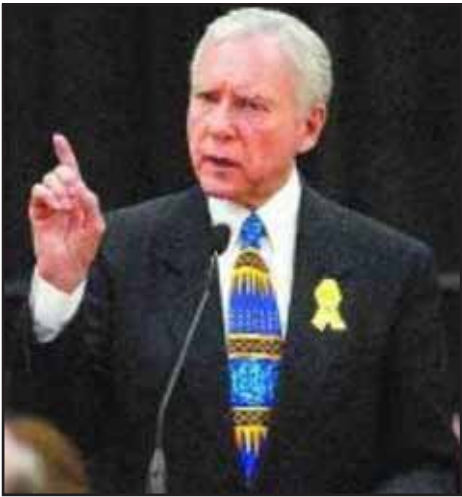
Nature’s Way Guesthouse

In Punta Gorda

Welcome To Nature’s Way Guesthouse
Clean, Safe, Affordable,
Central Location Sea Front View & Breeze
Single \$23BZD, Double \$33BZD,
Triple \$48BZD
Get off bus at Catholic Church on
Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

TOPICAL TIDBITS

US freezes Colombia funding.



Financial Times: The US Senate has frozen the transfer of millions of dollars in funds to the Colombian military pending investigations into concerns over human rights abuses and alleged ties between the country's armed forces and paramilitary groups.

The decision to suspend 25 percent of US military aid, worth \$55.2m (€40.6m, £27.5m), was adopted by Democratic Senator Patrick Leahy, chairman of the Senate appropriations committee's subcommittee on state and foreign operations, who is an outspoken critic of the level of military aid being sent to Colombia.

David Carle, spokesman for Mr. Leahy, alluded that the widening "parapolitics" scandal in Colombia was a factor in the senator's decision. The scandal has exposed connections between rightwing paramilitary groups and politicians and members of the armed forces.

An unvetted report for the CIA leaked to US media last month claimed that General Mario Montoya, the head of Colombia's armed forces, had collaborated with paramilitary groups linked to drug traffickers. Mr. Carle said the accusations against Gen Montoya were a "concern".

México's Development Plan



The government of Mexican President Felipe Calderón is in the final stages of

completing its "National Development Plan 2007-2012" (PND), which should meet the requisite publication date of May 31, 2007. Certain changes are forthcoming that could have significant and beneficial impacts at the international level and on non-Mexicans — namely with respect to bilateral and multilateral trade, as well as direct foreign investment in México.

A series of public hearings, with the participation of business, entrepreneurial and industrial chambers and organizations, consumer groups, academics, and economic development officials from México's 32 federal entities, are also just winding up. And according to a bulletin by the Secretariat, improving Mexican competitiveness has been a main proposal during all of the forums.

ProMéxico is to be México's future promotional entity for marketing and the opening of new markets, and the promotion of foreign trade and investments. A partnership between federal, state and local governments, along with the private sector, it is part of a new Secretariat of Economy strategy to coordinate development and promotion efforts and activities.

Jamaica to privatize sugar industry?



KINGSTON, Jamaica (JIS): Jamaica's Minister of Agriculture and Lands, Roger Clarke has said that, with the surge of interest in ethanol, there has been a renewed interest in the privatisation of the local sugar industry.

This interest in ethanol, he noted, was brought about by the recent policy by the United States Government to reduce dependence on foreign oil imports. Clarke made these remarks in his 2007/08 Budget presentation. "Jamaica's own access to the United States market for this product under the Caribbean basin initiative has put us in a very advantageous position," said Mr. Clarke. As a result of this he pointed out, the government had reopened the pre-qualification bidding process to ac-

commodate some compelling interest."

Continuing, Clarke said, "Whether the investors will do ethanol or a combination of ethanol and sugar, the future is bright and sweet for the industry. The continued diversion of sugar into ethanol in Brazil is causing the price of sugar to rise on the world market. The fact that sugar cane yields eight times more ethanol than corn as a feedstock augurs well for the industry".

Wolfowitz "unsustainable"!



Germany believes Paul Wolfowitz's position as head of the World Bank has become unsustainable, a German minister has told the Financial Times Deutschland (FTD) newspaper.

World Bank staff have called for Wolfowitz to quit following his admission that he approved promotion and high salaries for his girlfriend.

"The situation... is no longer acceptable," Heidmarie Wiczorek-Zeul, a development minister, told the FTD in an article to run on Monday.

"My conclusion is that Wolfowitz should do the bank a service and take the consequences himself. The sooner, the better."

And Wolfowitz, whose appointment to the World Bank presidency in mid-2005 was controversial because of his role as an architect of the Iraq war while at the Pentagon, has refused to step down.

The US government has urged leading European countries to withhold judgment until the World Bank's 24-nation board decides on his future.

South Africa honours Ramphal & Williams

The South African Government will today confer its highest national honour on Sir Shridath Ramphal, former three-term Commonwealth secretary general, as well as posthumously on Trinidad and Tobago's longest serving prime minis-

ter, Dr Eric Williams.



The awards will be presented at a state ceremony in South Africa by President Thabo Mbeki. Both will receive the 'Order of the Companions of O R Tambo', for peace and friendship, as well as outstanding contributions against apartheid and racism.

Williams' daughter, Erica, is expected to receive the award on behalf of her father who died in 1981

US and EU - need to cede power

Erco Press: The United States and the European Union need to adapt to global changing economic reality and for their own good give up their leadership monopolies at the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, according to a report from the Atlantic Council of the United States.

"What the US and the EU really need to do, in a major way, is to recognize the shift of economic power, of energy power, of GDP power to Asia and Latin America and the emerging economies" underlined former US Deputy Treasury Secretary Stuart Eizenstat from the Atlantic Council.

"We still think we're the dominant powers and we are to a point. But the world is shifting" Eizenstat said adding that the US and EU need to shift and make global institutions like the IMF and the World Bank more representative of their broader membership.

Cuban refinery

(AFP): A modernised oil refinery is set to go on line in December, official media reported, in a shift due to turn imports-dependent Cuba into an oil exporter.

(Please Turn To Page 11)



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Your weekly HOROSCOPE

ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

You can make profitable investments if you purchase an art object for your home. You should look into making some physical changes, such as new hair color or toning up your body. Don't let your stubborn nature get the better of you. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- may 21)

You will be emotional with regard to your personal life. You can convince others to follow suit. Your ability to communicate with ease will win the hearts of those you are in touch with this week. You can expect sorrow to evolve from the information you discover. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

Do not yield to children or relatives when they really don't deserve it. You will find that unfinished projects at home will be most satisfying. Family trips or projects should be on your mind. Tell it like it is. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Try not to let relatives or friends cause any friction with your mate. You can get phenomenal returns if you present your ideas to those who can back your interests. Put some energy into getting back into shape. Listen to reason. You are ahead of your time, and trying to stay in one spot could be asking too much. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Help others solve their dilemmas. You may find that others do not do things the way you want; however, if the job gets done, let it pass. Problems with in-laws may cause friction in your personal relationship. Avoid disputes with family; their complaints can't change anything anyway. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

Travel will entice you; however, a tendency to overspend is quite possible. Uncertainty regarding your mate may emerge; reevaluate what you see in each other. You will learn a great deal from people with different cultural backgrounds. Purchases will be well worth it and they will last a long time. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

However, you must not neglect your family. You could have a need to make some changes this week. You may be emotional and quick to judge others. Chances to express your ideas and beliefs can bring popularity as long as you're not arrogant. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

When the work is done, they may

serve you for a change. Eliminate situations that are no longer to your advantage. Try not to be too lavish with your lover. Your domestic scene could continue to be in an uproar this week. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Don't overspend to impress others. You could be disillusioned if you let relative in on your emotional thoughts. Do something together and you'll be surprised how sweet a deal you can make. Don't make large purchases unless you have discussed your choices with your mate. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Don't be critical or overly opinionated with dislikes; it could cause disapproval and unwanted opposition. You can sell your ideas to those who have the money to back them. You may be overreacting to a situation at hand. Invite friends or relatives into your home. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Don't gamble unless you can afford to lose. Be careful when dealing with investments. Raise your self esteem and your confidence if you want to get back into the mainstream again. You may have been too nice to a friend who just wanted to take advantage of you. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Don't give them the use of your credit card. Family members will not be happy with the amount of time you are spending away from home. You may find yourself caught in the middle of an argument that has nothing to do with you. Don't be afraid to say what's on your mind. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

(Continued From Page 10)



Overhauled with capital from a joint Venezuelan-Cuban company, the Cienfuegos refinery in south-central Cuba will meet the Caribbean country's own demands, and earmark 9,000 barrels of gasoline a day for export, Venezuela's communications and information ministry said in a release circulated here.

Vice President Carlos Lage confirmed the facility was set to start operations in December, the Juventud Rebelde newspaper reported.

Lage said the refinery would process 65,000 barrels per day of petroleum by late this year or early 2008, the paper said.

Cuban authorities in late March said Havana was optimistic it could soon see a breakthrough in exploiting major oil reserves.

Poor starving to feed autos



Christian Science Monitor: Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez calls the boom in ethanol the equivalent of starving the poor "to feed automobiles."

Ethanol, which is derived from crops such as corn or sugar, is seen by some as a green alternative, a rising star on the path toward reducing dependence on foreign petroleum. But it's not just

Mr. Chávez who is questioning whether the benefits outweigh the unintended consequences.

Now poultry industry executives, who have seen the price of feedstock has gone up; Mexican consumers, facing a 60 percent jump in the cost of tortillas; and even environmentalists, who look at the amount of fertilizer that will be needed to grow extra crops, are wondering aloud whether ethanol will help or hurt Latin American economies.

The South American energy summit that concluded in Venezuela this week provided the latest platform for critics. Even though the debate has been cast as another issue in the long line of ideological battles aligning Chávez and Cuban leader Fidel Castro against the US, some analysts say that their point is larger than political: If the price for staple food items rises across the globe because of demand, Latin America will be one of the hardest hit regions.

"I think people worry that rich Americans are trying to fuel cars at the expense of hungry people in poorer countries," says Janet Larsen, director of research at the Earth Policy Institute in Washington. "This increased push for ethanol production could be an incredible foreign policy blunder."

What we are seeing now, she says, is the beginning of a very long debate. Chávez's comments came shortly after harsh op-eds penned by Mr. Castro who, in his first public statements since falling ill last July, resurfaced to call the US proposal "genocidal."

His words follow mass protests in Mexico, after the price of corn tortillas shot up in January. The South American Energy Summit at Margarita Island was the first meeting between Brazil's President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva since Chávez lambasted the plan after Mr. Bush visited Brazil last month, when Bush and Lula signed a proposal to promote the industry in the region.



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Big Falls Warriors & Antixx United FC win in TIDE Freshwater Cup 2007

Saturday April 21, 2007
Toledo Union Field, Punta Gorda
Game One
Big Falls Warriors 5 [1] – Real Belice FC 0 [0]
Goals
Big Falls Warriors
Marcus Pau 16
Regino Hernandez 50
Magarito Tut 65
Juan Mendez 76
Alistair Armstrong 80

With only nine men on the field -the other players did not show up- Real Belice failed to improve their status of zero (0) points after three games. With five different players getting on the score sheet, Big Falls were able to get their first three points of the competition. 5-nil it ended in favor of Big Falls. Both



Evert mangar scored the opening peanlty against Antixx united.

FC 2 [1]
Goals
Mavericks United
Evert Mangar 18
Arden Garay 84
The captain for Mavericks made no mistake from the penalty spot after a ball was apparently handled in the area and it was a 1-nil ball game in their fa-
vor in the 18 min. Referee Earl Gutierrez had the Mavericks sweeper Mike Wil-
liams sent off in the 40 min with a straight red, for some exchange of words. Ac-
cording to Mike he was only stating that the game ball was too soft. Playing one
man down however did not affect their performance and they held Antixx to a
2-nil shut out to keep their hopes alive for a semifinal spot in the next round of
competition.

Next Set of Fixtures

Saturday April 28, 2007 at the To-
ledo Union Field
Game one: Bella Vista FC vs. Silver
Creek Uprising (4:00 p.m.)
Game two: Jah Roots vs. Estrellas
FC (6:00 p.m.)

Points Standing as of Week Seven

Teams	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Form
Silver Creek Uprising	3	2	1	0	10	1	9	7	W W D
Real Belice FC	3	0	0	3	2	16	-14	0	L L L
Big Falls Warriors	3	1	0	2	5	6	-1	3	L L W
Integrity Strikers	2	1	1	0	2	1	1	4	W D
Bella Vista FC	3	2	0	1	8	3	5	6	W L W
Group B (South)									
Teams	GP	W	D	L	GF	GA	GD	Pts	Form
J V United	3	1	1	1	6	7	-1	4	D W L
Mavericks FC	3	2	0	1	3	7	-4	6	L W W
Jah Roots FC	2	0	0	2	2	3	-1	0	L L
Antixx United	3	1	1	1	5	6	-1	4	D W L
Estrellas FC	3	2	0	1	12	5	7	6	W L W

teams have their final match against In-
tegrity Strikers who will be looking to
advance to the semi-final round with a
win against the two teams.
Game Two
Antixx United FC 0 [0] – Mavericks

Comments? Suggestions?
or want to share your
thoughts
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THE hunt FOR HEALTHY FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

SULY'S

Farmer's Market, Belize City

We reviewed Suly's some time ago, but back then we were captivated by the fattening rice and beans and fried fish. Well that is still good as ever ,for those who can afford it in the waistline, but we are on the mission to find healthy options. A family operation serving up local food may not seem like such a place, but Suly's does have some healthier fare. The esca-beche is at the top of the list, with a generous helping of chicken and lots of onions, this infamous dish is well worth its 400 or so calories. The chir-mole is not far behind either. Served with hot tortillas, it will keep those carbs at bay, at least till tomorrow anyway. So, revisit Suly's, I promise you that it well worth the parking hassel, and oh yes, the crowds still mob the conch soup. I can only watch their bowls in envy.

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Hurry, hurry, get dey tamara

➡ (Continued From Page 4)
den even from the Cabinet.

All I know is when I need medical attention I will only go to Medical Associates and KMH, thank you. The only way UHS could get my business, or recover any semblance of concern for the tax payers who are bailing them out, is to begin giving free treatment for poor Belizeans. As if that would ever happen....

But I digress. Back to traffic week and the morning talk shows. There were also serious calls from people who had given the problem of road accidents serious thought. One gentleman, and I am sorry I did not get his name, said people "commit accidents."

He reminded us all that not only do some motorists drive recklessly or drunk, some pedestrians, especially in rural villages, sit or stumble onto the highway drunk and cross the road unexpectedly right into oncoming traffic. It's not exactly suicide, but pretty damned close to it. Some Freudians would say these people do indeed have a death wish. Certainly they are committing their own accident. They end up dead, the sober motorist who was otherwise obeying all the laws gets the blame. And families on both sides grieve. Everyone loses because someone was celebrating something irresponsibly. Because getting drunk mattered more than getting home in one piece.

Personal responsibility is not high on many Belize's personal agenda. We don't want to do anything that puts the brakes on our having a good time. We don't want to stop drinking and drive. We don't want to stop talking (even texting) and drive, we don't want to slow down and drive. Belizeans who are normally passive, who won't stand up for the democratic process or political reform, or unlawful firings or unfair taxes or too many street shootings or too much incest and domestic violence, are somehow transformed into raging bulls on the road, charging against the injustice of someone passing us, going faster or committing the unforgivable sin of driving an older model car or truck that does not have as much get-up-and-go as our own.

We, who will patiently wait an hour in the transport office to renew a driver's license-- although their system is now computerized-- cannot wait two seconds behind a car that might delay our arrival at a traffic jam up ahead by two more seconds.

We, who say proudly proclaim at every sports day, quiz contest, seminar and workshop that the children are our future, load them into the back of pickup trucks, are too cheap to purchase child and infant seats, "love them so much" we put them on our laps and give in to

their whines about the discomfort of seatbelts...

As for the children themselves, the same road insanity which overtakes so many adults seems to afflict a great many of our children. Kids who are pretty well behaved at school under their teacher's watchful eye, suddenly go nutso while walking home, jumping out at cars, playing chicken with trucks and buses, pushing other children off the sidewalk, into the street. They laugh and dance around as if it's a grand joke to give some driver a heart attack behind the wheel. Can't they be ticketed for a mischievous act?

It is a strange transformation that takes over us, our loss of fear in the face of a big metal, fast moving object. Even slow moving ones can crush a bike or a person. But you'd never know that from the number of cyclists who drive behind cars as they reverse from parking spaces. Perhaps they want us to hit them so they can try to hit us up for damages, get a new bike. It's as inexplicable to me as the people who throw their bike down in front of an entrance to shop and expect all the other patrons to step over it. Only more dangerous.

So yes, we, the drivers, bikers and walkers of Belize share the blame for road traffic death and destruction. We commit a great many accidents every year in this country, kill a great many of our fellow men and women.

But the government shares the other half of the responsibility. For until there are proper markings and lines drawn on the highway, until there is proper signage delimiting speed limits, one way streets, speed bumps and pedestrian crossings,

until there is proper maintenance and drainage to prevent perilous potholes and road erosion, until there is a HIGHWAY PATROL instead of stationary checkpoints, people will break the law unimpeded.

In fact, the single most important deterrent to crazy driving is the knowledge that anywhere, anytime, you could be stopped by the traffic police and cited.

Without that, human nature dictates people will take chance, take risks, and pat themselves on the back for their near misses with other vehicles, near brushes with death itself.

Barring a nationwide highway patrol, someone stationed at the foot of the Haulover Bridge could probably catch upwards of a hundred people a day overtaking illegally and even forcing people off the road, onto the shoulder. It happens over and over and over and no one stops it. No one even tries.

There are other high risk points on every major road in the country. All the Transport Ministry has to do is pull out their stats and check where the most accidents occur and put some signage and personnel in those areas. Dozens of lives could be saved and it might, in time, even alter the behaviour. Not to mention raise some much needed revenue.

I think it may also be time to outlaw the use of cell phones while moving. Distraction due to phone calls makes people drive as badly as the drunks. Tickets will be effective and again, revenue producing. Why, I'll bet one year worth of phone tickets alone could pay

for a patrol car.

I was pleased the insurance agent pulled no punches, was not embarrassed, did not consider drinking and driving a taboo topic to talk to her customers about. I think she might have done some good this long weekend, making a few people think before they drink and to know the company they buy their insurance from cares not only about their car, but their life.

I think a lot more people need to care about Belizean lives, and stop putting their own. It may feel more fun, more free, more rebellious to drive fast and wild, but sooner or later the men and women who overtake on dangerous curves meet the wrong person on the other side. Sooner or later the pedestrian stumbling home falls asleep on the road instead of his bed, sooner or later the child who dares the container truck winds up under it.

It's only a matter of time before the inevitable happens and your luck runs out.

Fix the roads GOB and get smart Belizeans. This is too small a place to have so many of us committing accidents against each other.



By: **Karla Heusner Vernon**

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Human cargo biz worth \$32 bn globally

Times of India, by **Meenakshi Sinha** 29 Apr, 2007

It's a \$32 billion global industry that smuggles millions of people — most of them women and girls — across international borders every year. That's how big the problem of illegal human trafficking is. Recognised by UN as a global issue today, almost no country is immune to it. According to a 2006 United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report (Trafficking In Persons: Global Patterns), there are 127 countries where human trafficking originates, along with 98 transit countries and 137 destination countries.

And yet, few countries are even willing to acknowledge that the problem affects them, thus hampering global efforts at combating it. While UNODC executive director Antonio Maria Costa admits worldwide estimates are difficult to pinpoint, he says the number could run into millions. A US State Department report estimates that 600,000-800,000 people may be illegally smuggled across borders annually (about 17,500 end up in the US alone).

The majority are victims of sexual exploitation and as many as 50% are minors.

Human trafficking is also on the rise in Africa and South Asia. Experts say about half of all victims are children, many of whom are sold by their own families. UNICEF estimates that West and Central Africa alone account for about 200,000 children trafficked annually, while 250,000 women and children come from south-east Asia. Russia is a major source of women trafficked globally. The ILO estimates that 20% of the five million illegal immigrants in Russia are victims of forced labour. Russia is also a hub for child sex tourism and a significant destination and transit country for persons smuggled into neighbouring countries, the Gulf, Europe, Asia, and North America. However, global trends indicate that Asia tops the list in child trafficking.

The UK is one of the favourite destination countries for illegal migration, including from India, especially Punjab. The country has stepped up enforcement efforts to detect and prevent ille-

gal migration, says Kitty Tawakley, deputy head of communications at the British High Commission in India. "Efforts are also on to raise awareness about the problem, particularly in Punjab, and promote legal routes for migration."

A well-organised business, human trafficking is estimated to be worth \$10 billion in immediate profits alone, apart from linkages with money laundering and drug trafficking. UNODC suggests a multilayered attack on this organized cartel: Demolishing markets that generate profit for traffickers; addressing the demand for cheap labour; dealing with poverty and lack of opportunities that create a willing pool of potential victims, and targeting intermediaries.

Weak laws and poor international cooperation make things easier for traffickers. Prosecutions leading to convictions have been few, with the Netherlands, US and Ukraine leading the list. The US has seen convictions in such cases rise by a whopping 109% in five years (2001-2005), according to a 2005 Department of Justice report.

INdependent Classifieds

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Open letter to the British newspapers from GOB

Britain and Belize are separated by 4,000 miles of Atlantic Ocean, but in many ways we are very close. Her Majesty the Queen is our Head of State, we speak English, and we are governed by the rule of law. The ties between our two countries are many, various and strong. It is particularly distressing, therefore, that British newspapers should appear intent on inflicting damage to the good reputation of our small but proud nation. We have reason to be grateful to Ambassador H.E. Michael Ashcroft, for his commitment to our country has in recent years become an investment boost to our developing economy. He has invested in Belize, and others have followed his example. This does not mean, as has been suggested, that he exerts **an unhealthy control** over our country. His appointment as our Ambassador to the United Nations reflects our confidence in his ability to represent us effectively. He has no role in the formulation of policy.

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een

Page

When life gives you lemons, make orange juice and leave the world wondering how the heck you did it.
Don't p—s me off! I'm running out of places to hide the bodies!
He who laughs last thinks slowest
I couldn't repair your brakes so I made your horn louder.
A fool and his money are soon partying
A good Mom lets you lick the beaters. A great Mom turns off the mixer first.
I smile all the time because I have no clue what is going on
Luck is my middle name!
Unfortunately, my first name is bad.

Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)
embarrassment and humiliation for all standard six teachers. Students lost trust and confidence in their teacher and now see their teachers as not capable of guiding them. The ministry has undermined the authority of all standard six teachers. Will this have any positive impact on the primary school examination results and in society? What has the Ministry gained publishing the results? Is this a form of improving the education system in our country?
It is my hope that the Ministry of Edu-

Michael Ashcroft is a very successful businessman, who has earned a reputation in Belize for being tough. But he is also fair, and, in our experience, entirely trustworthy and reliable. We consider as baseless and preposterous recent allegations of improper influence and pressure, of money laundering and of drug trafficking. The Government of Belize or our Central Bank have never been asked questions about Michael Ashcroft by the United States Drug Enforcement Agency. Indeed, only last week, we contacted the U.S. Embassy in Belize which categorically repeated that there is no information even suggesting that Michael Ashcroft is under investigation or on some watch list. Additionally the structure of our banking system is inimical to money laundering, and Michael Ashcroft's companies have been amongst the most active supporters of financial regulation and control.

There are indications of the damage

I have six locks on my door all in a row. When I go out, I lock every other one. I figure no matter how long somebody stands there picking the locks, they are always locking three.
A man who can smile when things go wrong has found someone to blame it on
Math
He's teaching her arithmetic,
He said it was his mission,
He kissed her once, he kissed her twice, and said, "Now that's addition."
And as he added smack by smack
In silent satisfaction,
She sweetly gave the kisses back and said, "Now that's subtraction."
Then he kissed her, she kissed him,
Without an explanation,
And together both smiled and said, "That's multiplication,"
Then Dad appeared upon the scene and made a quick decision,
He kicked that boy three blocks away, and said, "Now that's long division!"

cation will recognize that the issue of addressing the current low performance of students should be addressed differently from what it is proposing. Teachers should not be used as rats in an experiment to correct a problem that needs to be addressed from the very top to the bottom of the educational system. As a concerned and dedicated teacher, I trust that the Ministry and its key personnel will seriously consider the issues that I raised in this letter.
Sincerely, Angel Requena

which our country might sustain as a result of the current rag-bag of unsubstantiated allegations in the British press which seems to be totally insensitive and unmindful of the possible negative effect on investors confidence. We have no wish to become embroiled in the political affairs of Britain, but the time

has now come when the British press should either produce evidence to substantiate its allegations or cease this campaign of smear and whispering, which not only stains the reputation of Michael Ashcroft but puts at risk the economy and livelihood of the Belizean people.
Belmopan - 19 July, 1999.

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Rat Race in Paradise

By: Mario Lara

Belizeans must have a mighty good sense of humour to be able to put up with political mess in which the country seems to be mired. The leader of the Opposition owns the law firm that represents the bank that got the unlimited loan guarantee signed by the Prime Minister unbeknownst to several senior ministers.

And for all these great moments in Belizean government and politics, we have a national debt that will require that our grandchildren's grandchildren to still be making payments. Someone recently told me that ill-timed humour can turn out offensive. Well, I think the joke that is being played on the Belizean people cannot be more ill-timed or more offensive. I don't find it very funny at all. Yet, if I don't laugh, I will cry – so I understand completely, if the average Belizean shrugs it all off with a witty remark, says "Oh well..." and goes about their daily lives trying to figure out how to make a living.

What else is left for them to do? Civil unrest won't put food on the table or make things any better. Come elections day, you cast your vote and hope for the best and go back to

work. Better get used to it. Some find comfort in saying that Belize is still a great place to live and wouldn't want to be any other place on Earth. I hope those who say that give at least some credit to the thousands of Belizeans, who in their hearts would rather be at home, but who choose instead to leave and go live abroad and send whatever economic support they can back home to help ease the pinch and help boost the economy. No doubt about it, without the millions of dollars in remittances sent from those abroad, things would feel a lot worse back home.

Indeed, some might argue that this

cushion is actually a part of the problem since it relieves the government of its responsibilities to the people.

The opportunity cost of the long list of scandals, secret deals, and incompetence can never be determined. The heavy tax burden is not the full bill. A father who gambles and drinks his paycheck away does not only rob his children of the ill spent paycheck, he also robs them of a better future. It is the same with the unsustainable level of borrowing and rampant corruption occurring in Belize. They are robbing Belize of a brighter future.

Yes, the sun will still shine on Belize, the breeze will still blow; and mango

trees will still bear fruit; but poor Belizeans will have diminishing ability to enjoy these things if we continue down this path. As more of the country's resources are sold off to pay down debt and become concentrated in the hands of a few, the majority of Belizeans will become marginalized in their own homeland and will be forced to serve the masters under slave-like conditions.

They will be trapped in a rat race in the midst of paradise. Some already are! Now if that isn't a cruel joke, I don't know what is.

You can contact the author, Mario Lara at cowfootsoup@yahoo.com

3 more Cabinet Ministers condemn UHS Guarantee

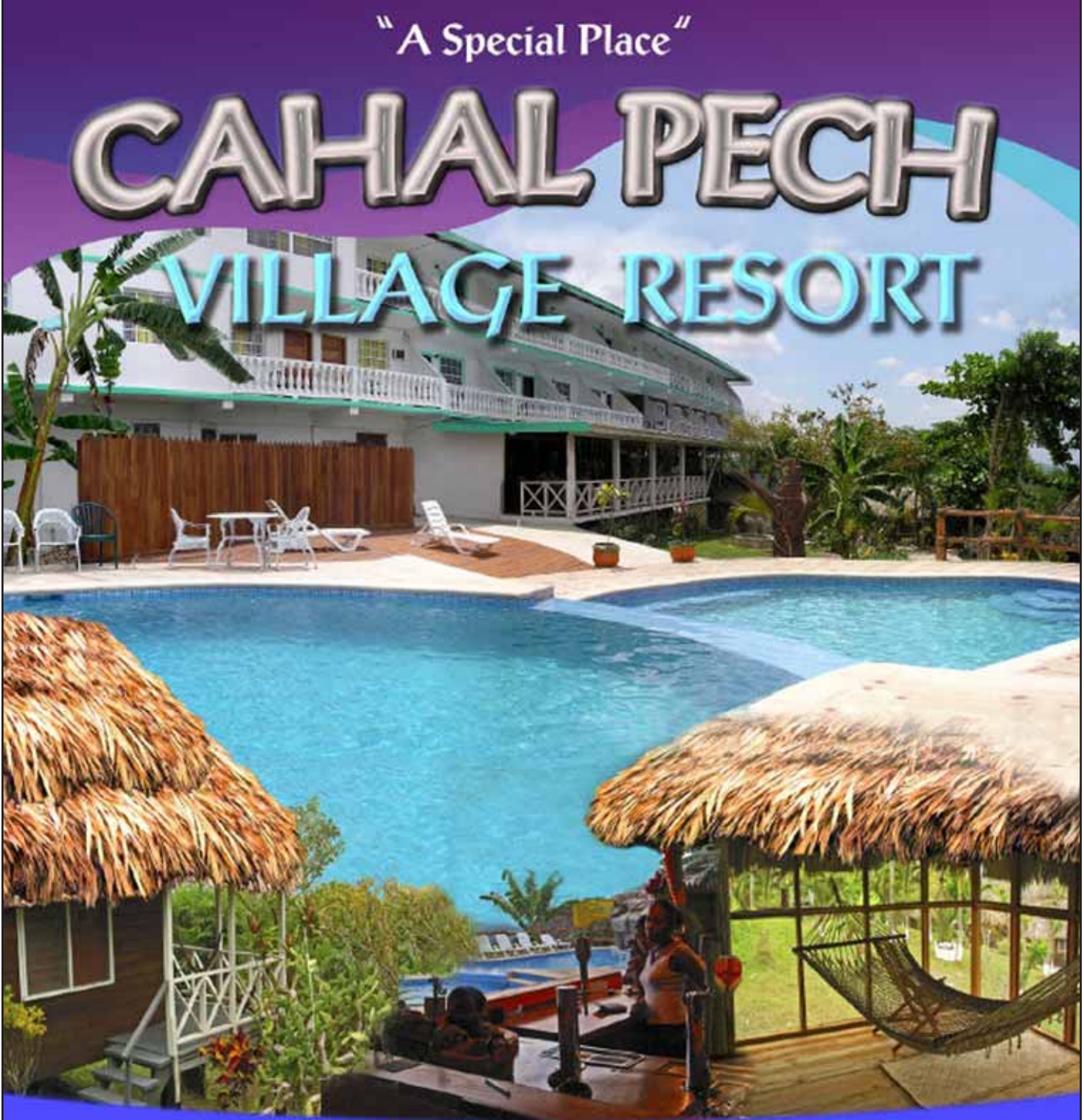
➡ (Continued From Page 1)

ing of the guarantee, we were not aware." About the principle of issuing an unlimited guarantee for a private company, he said, "maybe the judgment calls would have been different if it had the benefit of Cabinet input."

Sports and Defense Minister Cordel Hyde, said, "we had no idea about that." He added that if he had known about it, he certainly wouldn't have supported it.

That makes 5 Ministers of government, all members of the Public Finance Committee and all former G-7'ers who have said that they didn't know about the document and also said that they wouldn't have supported it if they had known.

—from www.7newsbelize.com
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