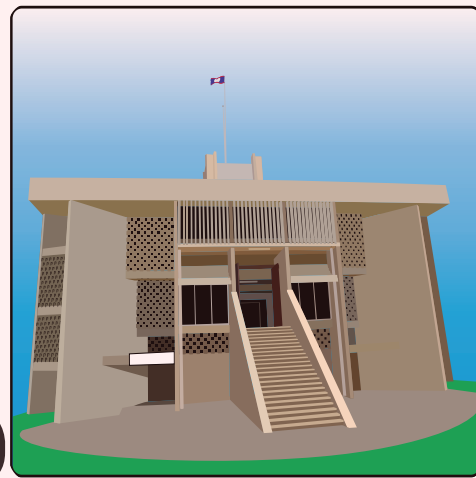




Capital Weekly

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



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Early Elections

Is PM Barrow Getting Ready to Roll the Dice?

It's been rumoured for some time now, that with the chronic leadership crisis in the Opposition PUP and the wave of populist support Prime Minister Dean Barrow and his UDP Government appear to be riding as a result of its nationalist stance, the PM has been contemplating early elections.

But the first hint from the PM himself came just over a month ago on October 21, 2011 in the National Assembly during his wrap up of the debate on the Constitutional Amendment placing majority ownership and control of public utilities in the hands of the Government and People of Belize.

The PM was responding mainly to comments by the newly named, yet to be installed Leader (at that time) of the PUP, Hon. Francis Fonseca.

"Notice one thing: you remember



Prime Minister Dean Barrow

they were starting with a thing lately, every time they finish making their speech and going on about how things are bad, they would say, call the elections now. I notice you never said "call the elections now" this time.

And, of course, we

can't call it now because the Belizean people will feel so sorry for you all, and they will feel like we are taking advantage of you all if we call the elections now, because you all are in such shambles, you all are so hopeless and worthless, that

again our democratic instincts prevent us from calling the election now. I say, we are not going to call it now, I never said we will not call it next month, or the month after, or the month after."

In addition to the PM's public hint, there were countless corroborating reports, allegedly, from members of Cabinet and the 'inner circle' claiming to be privy to the PM's private thoughts on the matter, and they were all vouching that, as one person put it, "the man is dead serious about calling this thing early."

If such was the case, the PM clearly had

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Meet 'Santino'



See Story On Page 6

Editorial

Belize at the Crossroads Again

Over the past few weeks, the Belizean electorate has been deeply engaged in political debate. This mood has been fuelled by the upcoming March Municipal Elections, the conventions in certain key constituencies; and then by the big story that Prime Minister Dean Barrow may be inclined to call early general elections.

Is it possible that the Opposition PUP could defeat the incumbent UDP in snap general elections? A significant majority of Belizean voters seem to believe that the UDP has a distinct advantage for several reasons.

The main reason is that the PUP is still not unified. Secondly, while there have been minor scandals in the UDP, these are minute as compared to those in the past PUP Government. Thirdly, the UDP has tried to implement social programs geared at the poor. This is seen as noble since the economic climate is not as good as we would want it to be.

In 1993, when the PUP called early general elections, the UDP managed to wrestle victory away from the PUP by a slim majority. The PUP was confident that it had a clear majority support.

Jorge Espat had just defeated Owen Morrison in a by-election in the Freetown Division in February of that year. That seat was left vacant by Derek Aikman's ouster due to a bankruptcy declaration. The party also won the City Council Election in landslide fashion one month later.

The PUP had momentum; and the UDP was also divided at that time. But when the votes were all in and it came down to the counting, it was the most tense moment for both political parties, especially the PUP which had entered the election in an overconfident mode. It was down to the wire. Areas like Collet, Orange Walk North and Toledo East were the key difference.

While the UDP appears to have the momentum now, nothing in the political arena is ever sure. Some candidates have a lot ground to cover and a lot of healing to do in their constituencies.

The sentiments among the working class is that while the people are not entirely satisfied with the performance of the UDP in some areas, the PUP has not reformed enough to warrant any serious consideration to form the next government.

In the streets, the sentiments are real. We hate to admit it, but too many votes are for sale. The asking price for some is Five Hundred Dollars, for others Two Hundred, others a measly Fifty, for a decision of a lifetime. Many have lost trust in politicians. Yet, among all classes, the Belizean electorate is very educated politically. A comment frequently made is that the UDP is not as corrupt as the past PUP, but that the PUP spends more money on the voters. At the same time the electorate is aware that nothing is free. Somebody has to pay.

Which way will we choose?

Send comments to w.cut66@yahoo.com

Early Elections

Is PM Barrow Getting Ready to Roll the Dice?

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no intention of throwing at once all his cards on the table, and at his next grand public appearance, his quarterly Press Conference on Wednesday, November 2, at the Biltmore Plaza Hotel, he attempted, it seemed, to calm the anxiety over the rampant rumours of early elections with the following remarks in response to a pointed question from a local journalist as to whether the rumour was fact:

"I'm not going to play that game, although, there seems to be a very tempting invitation from the other side. When they went to the House for the Ninth Amendment, they did not issue forth their usual call for elections. But I see, since then, Mr. Fonseca's enthronement has produced a reversion to type, and he is saying, 'Yes, call the elections now.' Well, if we do call it, nobody can say that we are taking advantage of them, because they say that they are ready. But I know that we haven't made any decision along those lines. The better thinking at this juncture would certainly be that we await the results of the municipal elections, which we are confident of winning; and then use that as a springboard for the General Elections. It does remain a wide open question; although, I repeat that, as of now, the

thinking now is to 'whap them' first at the municipal elections, and then 'whap them' again in the General Elections thereafter."

Not as forthright a reply as the question asked, but it did appear to ease the anxiety somewhat. At least until the PM's subsequent appearance at a major public event, that event being an economic forum at Old Belize titled, *'Turning the Corner'*.

This time the PM was responding to a question about whether Belize Telemedia, now owned by the Government, will any time soon be offering what is known as, Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) services, something that, admittedly, the UDP had expressly pledged in its 2008 manifesto, and

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Capital Weekly

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

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Aragon for Commissioner

The New Face of Policing in Belize

Everyone is entitled to his opinion; and it is our opinion that the best fit for the post of Police Commissioner at this time is Assistant Commissioner Elodio Aragon Jr.

With a Master's Degree in Criminology and a firm but approachable personality, Aragon represents the new face of policing in Belize. That new face and style was on full display Monday Morning when he and the Police Press Officer made an appearance on Love FM/Love TV.

In his responses to the co-hosts of the show and callers from the public, Aragon was gracious and understanding, while also being frank and open. He stressed the need for all citizens to conduct themselves at all times with dignity, respon-



Crispin Jeffries
Commissioner of Police

sibility and intelligence. And he called earnestly on the public to give their full support to the Police as together we fight to bring crime under control.

For once, it was good to hear an officer of the high command leveling with members of the public rather than talking down at them.

No personal disrespect to Jeffries, whom we concede has excellent police skills, but whose credibility we believe was never fully restored after he became the poster-



Elodio Aragon Jr.
Assistant Commissioner of Police

cop for repression under the last administration, which had completely lost the trust of all Belizeans; which had indeed become a criminal gang protected by the law enforcement authorities.

We know there has been talk about bringing in a foreigner. We are not completely opposed to the idea of employing expertise and experience from abroad, but we are nationalists at heart and believe that the solutions to our problems must be organically Belizean.

We see no valid reason why our top cop position should not remain with a Belizean.

There is no single move that can solve the chronic problem of a Police Department that is severely handicapped by a lack of trust by the general public. But we *do* believe that the appointment of Elodio Aragon Jr. as Police Commissioner would be a first good step in the right direction. That's just our humble opinion.

(We note that since we scripted this article, it has been announced that Commissioner Jeffries is set to retire December 1, 2011, and that a foreign replacement is now definitely being sought. Again, we respectfully disagree with the move).

Cayo South

FORWARD

with **WITZ** and the

UDP



Turning the Corner

Prime Minister's Address at Economic Forum

(Wednesday, November 23, 2011, Old Belize Resort)

"Despite global conditions, Belize has weathered the storm and our economy is again on the right track. With a continued focus on poverty alleviation through social investment; job creation; enterprise development; growth in productivity; and safety and security, we can look forward to a better future."

I am pleased that today we gather to discuss how government and the private sector can collaborate in taking the necessary next steps to sustain economic growth in the immediate, intermediate and long term. This meeting comes as a follow up to several sessions that our policy team has had with select groups. But the invitation has been to the wider business sector, and I am happy to see a very representative attendance. During the consultations with the select group several issues emerged. These had to do with what was identified as current constraints on private sector, and general economic, progress. The idea is to discuss now ways in which these obstacles might be removed. But we also want to look at new modalities, arising as well principally from the suggestions made by those to whom we earlier spoke, for empowering business models and accelerating accommodation and facilitation on the part of Government and quasi-Government agencies.

In setting the stage for this forum that is overdue, it is fair to say that no Government of Belize has before been put into a situation where so much of its time and resources have had to be spent, including in Court, to recover



Prime Minister Dean Barrow

or protect the assets of the country. This has been at a juncture when the economic crosscurrents caused by both external and domestic factors, would normally have required the full attention of the authorities just to keep the system up and running. Despite our preoccupations with defence of sovereignty and patrimony, however, we have been able to deliver on critical economic and social systemic tasks much more effectively than most of our neighbours. But of course, we too have suffered from the management failures in the United States and the global crises these helped to cause.

Notwithstanding in-

herited circumstances and the dire world situation, then, Belize has not neglected the pressing domestic concerns. In fact, the development programmes and projects that are being implemented by this Administration since it took office in February 2008 have been unprecedentedly extensive. A booklet containing a list has been prepared by the Ministry of Economic Development, and will be distributed today.

Deservedly, our concentration on poverty alleviation, our bedrock pro-poor policies, has received much attention. But in a larger sense, this focus is also pro-business. First of all, these

programmes are largely financed by external inflows. Then, as in the case of the Boost and the Pantry programmes, they result in provision of disposable income to people that will spend, not save. As well, by zero-rating and reducing duties on basic food and other necessary items, we have increased the demand for those products. In turn, this provides greater opportunities for local businesses to import, make and sell them. Most important of all, investment in the poor helps to reduce crime; and investment in education increases productivity.

Moving now to the particular areas of concern raised by our private sector interlocutors, the most significant were as follows:

I. There is a perception of extensive tax evasion, particularly with respect to GST and Customs Duties. This, of course, leads to inequity, increasing the inability to compete on the part of those that continue to play by the rules.

II. Violent crime, including murder and armed robbery, has reached the levels where it has added tremendously to the security costs of doing business.

III. The Financial Sector operations need to be reviewed, with particular emphasis on interest rates, deposit rates and the excess liquidity in the system.

IV. The road infrastructure requires urgent attention, particularly the main streets in Belize City and the roads that are critical for the movement of tourists.

V. The absence of easily available, timely, and reliable statistics covering economic

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Turning the Corner

(Continued from Page 4)

and social behaviour, particularly trade statistics, causes problems for business and investment planning. Ditto for the difficulty in obtaining public finances numbers.

VI. The development concessions regime appears to be useful only to large businesses. As currently operated, the regime is too bureaucratic, time-consuming and expensive to be useful to medium and small enterprises.

At a more general level, there was clear indication of the need for improvement in the perception of the business climate.

Regarding this latter, there is an extent to which negative rhetoric has served to produce the very outcome it claimed to be warning against. And it was also clear that many of those consulted were not aware of the full extent of ongoing Government activity to address the country's development challenges. This is no doubt due to a failing on our part to disseminate that information.

But it is precisely that sort of deficit that interactions like today's will help to correct.

Now if I could seek to address each of the listed areas in turn:

The GST and Customs Duties situations are obviously troubling. But you would be aware that a leadership change has already taken place at the GST Department, and that two compliance officers, recruited from outside the Department, have been in post for some months now. These moves are paying dividends, but additional effort has been under consideration and two proposals are currently on the table. One is intended to increase the flow of information from individual establishments to the GST office, while the other is intended to encourage the public to become involved in oversight operations. Ms Betty Ann Jones can talk more about them later.

With respect to the Customs Department, you know that the ASYCUDA World system is presently

being installed, with financial support from CDB. We will need to establish how well that system works before embarking on any major new operation, although we are aware of the need to install container-scanning capability in the near future if we are to be able to continue to export to the US. We are also aware that implementation of the ASYCUDA project has been experiencing substantial delays, and we have commenced a detailed investigation to ascertain the reasons for the delay, and to accelerate implementation. Both the container-scanning operation and ASYCUDA will obviously change the structure and functioning of the Customs Department. The hope, and expectation, is that these developments will reduce the vicissitudes of the human factor and lead to better control of graft and corruption. Accordingly, the business playing field will naturally be more level as we succeed in eliminating the disadvantage to those

that virtue now holds hostage. Operations in the Free Zone, the Export Processing Zones and general contraband control, must also receive closer scrutiny in order to complement ASYCUDA.

In respect to crime, there is now common knowledge of the multi-dimensional actions that we have already undertaken to address the situation. At one level, we are expanding the capacity of the Police Department through stepped-up training, and, with support from our development partners, a substantial supply of additional equipment, including full forensics analysis capacity.

At another level we have sought to engage all community stakeholders, including the gangs, in an ongoing lifestyle evaluation and assistance process. The effort to deal with youth and gang violence has yielded much success over the past three months. And while it has been a completely local ini-

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Members of the Private Sector attentively tuning in to Prime Minister's address

Meet Santino Castillo

A Candidate Who Needs NO Introduction



Meet Santino Castillo

A Candidate Who Needs NO Introduction

Introduction (Not Needed)

One of the first challenges facing most candidates upon their entry into the political arena is that of getting themselves known to the public.

Fortunately for him, Santiago Castillo Junior has no such challenge.

Known affectionately to the entire Belize public as Santino, or Santi, for short (and yet more affection), this quintessential Belizean Businessman/Sports Enthusiast & Sponsor/Entertainment Promoter/Community Activist, having entered the fray in Caribbean Shores following the untimely step-down of incumbent Area Representative Carlos Perdomo, has a head-start and distinct advantage over the candidate that is purportedly the UDP establishment's pick.

Purportedly, we say, as even that is in dispute, as founders, former leaders and

venerable party stalwarts like Dean Lindo and Henry Young have come out with unre-served public endorsements of Santino as the best man to represent the UDP in the division left vacant.

Quite a man, indeed; and though the two other candidates, both of the fairer gender, have attempted to make that manhood and their womanhood an issue in the campaign, those who know him well (all 300 Thousand of them) will tell you that even if you're a woman, Santino, no chauvinist for sure, is still your man.

One thing more—before we bring you a brief biography of the man called Santino—it's not even his first time in the political arena. In the 1993 snap-elections called by an overconfident PUP, Santino made a very late entry in Belize Rural South as UDP candidate against PUP incumbent Glenn Godfrey, and came very close to unseating him in an election that the UDP surprisingly won by a narrow margin of 16-13 seats.

Brief Biography

Santino 'Santi' Castillo was born on May 23rd 1956. After completing his Primary School education at St. Catherine's Elementary and Holy Redeemer Primary School, he attended St. John's College, where he graduated in 1973.

He then furthered his studies at Valley Forge Military Junior College in Wayne, Pennsylvania, and Biscayne College from where he graduated with his Bachelors of Business in 1977.

Shortly thereafter, he returned to work for the family business. However, in 1985, he branched off on his own, and opened Santino's Division on Corner Hydes Lane and New Road.

That very same year, he also took over the Management of The Messengers Band, which he named Santino's Messengers.

In 2001, he re-joined the family business as a Director and Chief Executive Officer of the San Cas Group of Companies, a position he currently holds.

He also holds the

post of Vice Chairman of the BELT-RAIDE Board of Directors, and is also a member on the Board of Directors of Belize Electricity Limited.

Santi is surrounded by women, being the proud father of 3 beautiful daughters, Cassia, Cricel, and Cariel; and Sassia, his only granddaughter.

Conclusion:

Quite a resume indeed; but with Santino, it's fair to say that the formal resume doesn't tell even half the story.

Though Santi, (to paraphrase Dean Lindo) is a giant in the boardrooms, he is simultaneously as down-to-earth as anyone can be.

As Santino himself has asserted, being an innovative businessman, he knows how to get things done, how to find resources and stretch them for greater efficiency.

And (if we might add one on his behalf), as a politician, Santino certainly needs no crash course in being a man of and for the People.

The NBA IS Back!

Three Big Games on Christmas Day

NEW YORK | Sat Nov 26,
2011 7:26 am EST
(Reuters)

The National Basketball Association (NBA) and its players have reached a tentative deal on a new collective bargaining agreement which paves the way for a 66-game season starting on Christmas Day. Financial details of the plan were not released but NBA Commissioner David Stern said the settlement called for training camps and the league's free agency period to begin on December 9. "We've reached a tentative understanding that is subject to a variety of approvals and very complex machinations," Stern told a news conference early on Saturday after a 15-hour negotiating session. "But we're optimistic that will all come to pass and that the NBA season will begin on December 25, Christmas Day, with a triple-header. "We're very pleased that we've come this far. There's still a lot of work to be done in a lot of places, with a lot of committees and player groups and the like. "But we're optimistic that it will hold and we'll have ourselves an NBA season." Stern said the deal would be put before the owners' labor relations committee during a teleconference later on Saturday, before being passed on to the overall Board of Governors. Billy Hunter, the former executive director of the players' now-disbanded union, said: "We're going to turn it all over to the lawyers here and have them work out all the details." The players de-certified



*Dirk Nowitzki (Mavericks) and LeBron James (Miami)
In the Last NBA Finals Earlier this Year*

their union in an effort to file a variety of anti-trust lawsuits against the league. It could take up to 10 days for the players to re-form their union and ratify a formal labor deal. C O M P R O - MISE SOLUTION Stern acknowledged the

league had "literally thousands of people who are dependent upon the playing of our games at arenas, at parking lots, at restaurants around the stadium." "The reason for the settlement is (that) we've got fans, we've got players who would like to play, we've



*Kobe Bryant (L.A. Lakers), loved and hated by
Basketball fans all over, including Belize*

got others who are dependent on us," he said. "And it's always been our goal to reach a deal that was fair to both sides and would get us playing as soon as possible. But, that took a little time." Players have been locked out of NBA facilities for 149 days and, should the plan proceed as scheduled, teams would play 16 games less than a normal season. The league has said it lost \$300 million last season and were demanding a reduction in the players' share of income, which was 57 percent under the prior deal. NBA Deputy Commissioner Adam Silver said the tentative deal called for a more balanced league, "It will largely prevent the high spending teams from competing in the free agency market in a way that they have been able to in the past," he said. "It is a compromise and it is not the system we sought out to get in terms of a harder (salary) cap but the luxury tax is harsher than it was in the past deal and we hope it's effective. "We feel ultimately it will give fans in every community hope that their team can compete for championships and that their basis for believing in their team will be a function of management of that team rather than how deep the owners pockets are or how large the market is." Stern said he was optimistic both sides would approve the deal. "We want to play basketball," he said. (Reporting by Steve Ginsburg in Washington; Editing by John Mehaffey)

The NBA IS Back!

NBA lockout ends, Players get Played

The end of the NBA lockout has left fans disappointed over the delay and the money sharing of the 1 per cent.

Over the past two decades the NBA generated over \$2bn in ticket sales alone [GALLO/GETTY] The news blared with the electric intensity of a Black Friday taser. The NBA is back, baby! A 66-game season! Returning on Christmas Day, no less! As former journalist and current NBA talking-head Michael Wilbon cheered, "The league couldn't stage a more satisfying comeback. Even if those games are all moved to TNT, I'll feel the same way about the Christmas Day return". There were those bitter adversaries, NBA Commissioner David Stern and National Basketball Players Association Executive Director Billy Hunter, grinning ear-to-ear, discarding their suit jackets and wearing bunchy, seasonal sweaters from the Heathcliff Huxtable collection. Stern was smiling so wide, it appeared that if you poked his middle, he'd giggle like he was Poppin' Fresh. Hunter, no doubt feeling relieved that he at least fought off a "hard cap" and other demands from ownership, was clearly in the holiday spirit as well. Only NBPA President and LA Lakers co-captain Derek Fisher, wearing a suit, not a sweater, his eyes bleary from the marathon bargaining session, resembled someone who'd just endured one of the more bitter sports/labour negotiations in history. He looked like he'd just emerged from a Turkish prison. Judging by facial expressions alone, I'm going to stand with Fisher on this one. Forget the cuddly sweaters. Ignore President Obama's personal "good deal" thumbs up. Disregard the avalanche of tweets from your favourite star player about how excited they are to get back to work. The players were dunked on and Stern is wagging his tongue while hanging from the rim. If you ignore the bells and whistles and wipe away the confetti, we have what at the bottom line is a massive transfer of wealth from players to owners: \$3bn over the next decade, to be more precise. Three billion extracted from those we pay to see, to those who have spent the last 20 years treating fans and taxpayers like the cow-

ering abused partners we are. For those interested in the finer points of the proposed "amnesty provision" for releasing players or the "stretch clause", please search elsewhere, although I will say that giving teams the right to invalidate guaranteed contracts is a severe concession for the union to make. It also will do more to help big-market teams that spend carelessly than the much-discussed poor, small-market squads. In other words, there is nothing in this Collective Bargaining Agreement that changes the basic contours for reaching a championship: Teams that draft well and manage their cap will thrive no matter the size of their region (see San Antonio and Oklahoma City), and teams that spend blindly (the Knicks and Nets) or are owned by people proud to be stupid (the Kings or the Suns) will suffer. The deal won't make LeBron's sphincter unclench in the playoffs, and it won't make Carmelo play defence. It won't make Kobe any younger or Bynum any healthier. The league will still be The League. There are no promises that the owners will plough this newfound lucre into their teams. In fact, there are now greater restraints on spending than before. There are no assurances that any funds will be earmarked for coaches or scouts. There are no announcements that any of these savings will translate into lower ticket prices or NBA package discounts for fans. All it means is that the owners have received a financial windfall because they own and we don't. Now Donald Sterling, owner of the LA Clippers, can buy some more slums. Now Phil Anschutz, minority-boss of the Lakers, can keep fighting the teaching of evolution in schools. Now Dick Devos of the Orlando Magic can give even more generously to Focus on the Family. Now every shadowy Koch Brothers/Karl Rove political outfit that takes unlimited contributions will get a serious windfall just in time for the 2012 elections. Break out the bubbly. This should sting every player because coming off a year with record revenues, they should have

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From the Desk of the Chairman



Delroy Cuthkelvin
Chairman, Editorial Board

We are happy to be back with Capital Weekly, a Belizean newspaper that is unapologetically nationalistic, and uncompromising in upholding the virtues and principles of a righteous society and nation under the constitutional supremacy of the Almighty.

We also welcome to the journalistic fold our cousin and comrade through whose initiative a new 'star' is born in the 'North'; indeed, the Northern Star. You're off to a good start, and we have no doubt you will re-

main as constant as your name asserts.

For our part, we have done some restructuring and now return to serve you with greater energy and focus. At the helm is my brother, the good editor, who is, more than I, admittedly, a man on the ground, and has his own unique background and perspective on issues and developments, but who is nevertheless committed to the same general ideals.

We also hope to add, as we go along, regular contributions by other patriots from various walks of life, sharing their opinions and perspectives from their own vantage points and angles.

And you, thanks for your support and patronage; and we assure you that we have every intention to continue proving ourselves worthy of it.

Welcome back, and let me be the first to wish you a Blessed Christmas Season.

Sports Update

-With Ismael “Miley” Garcia



*Ismael “Miley” Garcia
National Sports Coordinator
Ministry of Sports*

So many exciting things are happening in the world of sports.

The works at the MARION JONES SPORTING COMPLEX are now in full swing and this much anticipated project will definitely do much to enhance the OLD CAPITAL CITY. As many as seventy (70) city youth were employed in the demolition works of the project and many have been kept on or will be re-employed in the other stages of construction. All non re-usable material has been removed and the works are now moving full steam ahead. Modern Construk and Urbanizadora Continental are the joint partners carrying out the PHASE 4 works of the project.

The synthetic track is now ready to be installed and very soon our athletes will have access to this modern facility.

The Ministry regrets the current im-

passee in the Belize Amateur Athletic Association (BAAA), which created last week's fiasco, and led to several young athletes being denied the opportunity to participate in a regional event held in Nicaragua. This situation, however, will be closely monitored by the National Sports Council, which has written to the International Amateur Athletic Association (IAAA) to ensure there is a prompt solution. Track is one of Belize's strongest events in terms of yields in medals. The new track is a sign of Government's commitment to strengthening this discipline even further.

The Ministry, in conjunction with the National Sports Council and the Olympic Committee, organized a warm homecoming for the girls of Belize Rural High who made Belize proud at the recent U-17 games in Panama. They place second and won the SILVER medal in baseball at this prestigious regional tournament. At the Ministry we salute these athletes and the Honorable John Saldivar says he is justly proud of this team and the coaching staff and organizers. Plans are underway to hold a special banquet for ALL athletes who made the jewel proud this year, including the likes of “gol-eador” **Deon McCauley**.

Speaking of football, elections have started for the members of

the Football Federation of Belize. It has been a rocky road to reach this point, but the Minister has maintained the position that all the Ministry wants is free and fair elections. That is the spirit of the mandate contained in the Sports Act that governs all sporting organizations. Nomination and election dates have been set for most of the football districts and will

were conducted by the Electoral Committee of the FFB, headed by Mr Eustace Ireland and supervised by Joel Wade of National Sports Council. The ten (10) football clubs recognized by the FFB as the members of that district association voted for a new slate to replace the incumbent Alejandro (Alex) Palacio. Elected to serve were Rawell Pelayo- Chair-



*Belize's own Deon MacCauley
The most prolific goal scorer so far in the qualifiers for
World Cup 2014 to held in Brazil*

soon be set for Belize's Top League. In a spirit of compromise, the Minister agreed to extend the deadlines for elections of the FFB members and the FFB National Executive to December 31 and March 10 respectively.

This past Saturday elections were held for the first member of the FFB, ORANGE WALK DISTRICT FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION at the Louisiana Government School. The elections

man, Pedro Benavides-Vice Chairman, Rafael Avila, Eloy Avila and Fernando Galvez-Members. The Ministry is happy to note that the elections are being carried out in a democratic fashion and that in Orange Walk the football clubs affiliated with the FFB were all given the right to elect their Executive Committee.

There is lots more to report on in SPORTS so look out for our next article in Capital Weekly.

Miss Imani: You Spoke a Mouthful

We Must Protect and Preserve Our Natural Resources!

We caught just the very end of her recent appearance on KREM FM's Sunday Review a couple weeks ago, but we must concede that in those few short minutes, Miss Imani Fairweather spoke a multi-million mouthful.

Miss Imani was making the point that for hundreds of years this little jewel we call Belize has been exploited time and time again by a handful who wished only to make a quick buck and leave, at the expense of long-term benefit and development for the masses that are here to stay.

She spoke of the logwood and mahogany that were exploited by the ship loads from the days of slavery and colonialism.

She chronicled the continued exploitation from then till now, of our priceless natural resources, and asked rhetorically, "How has it benefited us in the long term?"

Miss Imani was pointed, but not at all personal about the ongoing, unsound and irresponsible



Imani Fairweather Morrsion
Chairman of the University of Belize
An Environmentalist by Profession
And a Nationalist at Heart

exploitation of our natural resources on various fronts.

There is of course, our Oil, the exploitation of which, we continue to insist, is nothing short of daylight robbery; and while it was indeed the last administration that initially signed it away, it is nevertheless

the sworn mandate of this administration to bring redress and ensure that Belizeans get our fair share of our God-given wealth.

There is the Rosewood issue, which has perhaps been over-sensationalized by some, but this administration would do

well to heed the warnings.

And, of course, there is the deforestation of the Chiquibul by Guatemalans, which from all indications, has been enabled, to say the least, by a so-called policy of 'confidence-building' and the accompanying—some would say, absurd—concept of an 'adjacency zone' foisted upon us by international experts who were not born here, do not live here, and more than likely, never will.

Again it was the last administration that started it, but it is our hope that the current administration would rewind and rethink it.

We are no environmentalists, nor ultra-conservationists, but common sense tells us that if we do not protect and preserve what is ours, we will soon have nothing.

You spoke a mouthful, Miss Imani. It is people like you who will ensure that this administration, which you clearly support, does NOT come remotely close to committing the costly "mistakes" of the last government.



Turning the Corner



Alan Slusher, Advisor to the Prime Minister

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tiative to this point, we have also signed on to a CARICOM pilot that should assist.

At still another level, RESTORE BELIZE is now fully operational; and with assistance from Dr Herbert Gayle in a consulting capacity, the programme is seeking to coordinate a number of Government interventions that are intended to address the longer-term needs and aspirations of at-risk youth and their families.

At the heart of the overall response, of course, is the requirement to provide all members of the population with a reasonable expectation of a comfortable life, if they make the effort to help themselves. This necessitates an enabling environment that includes a sufficient number of primary school places, adequate opportunity for secondary, tertiary, and technical training, and a physically healthy environment and basic medical care. It also requires that opportunities exist for each individual to work and generate

income. Again, the timeliness of this forum is apparent in seeking an expansion of the private sector level of economic activity. This will create a greater employment space and opportunities for workers in addition to those produced by Government's job-creation efforts.

In respect to the financial infrastructure, ever since it took office the Administration has been concerned about the high levels of interest rates in the banking system, and the effect of those rates on the level of domestic business activity and export competitiveness. The expectation that the sharp decline in interest rates in Belize's main trading partners would have been reflected in similar decreases locally has not been realized. There has been a great increase in domestic banking system liquidity as loan demand has dropped in response to declining aggregate demand. But this has not driven down lending rates to any significant degree. Indeed, while there has been an almost precipitous tumble in average deposit rates,

average lending rates have fallen only marginally, benefitting the banks by way of larger interest rate spreads.

Before I tell you the details of the moral suasion that the Central Bank has been employing to deal with the situation, I should tell you that it has not been enough. Now I understand only too well the complexities of the situation and the limits of Central Bank power in an ultra-sensitive situation where none of our commercial banks is truly locally owned. And while I will not say that the banks in Belize operate in the fashion of a cartel, I will most assuredly say that more competition is needed. One step in that direction would be to turn the DFC into a full-scale national commercial bank, and Government will shortly be appointing a committee to examine that possibility. The time may also have come to legislate a cap on interest rate spreads.

Meanwhile, though, and ever since the start of the economic slowdown, the Central Bank has been encouraging the commercial banks to work with their clients through this regionally and globally difficult period. Obviously, loan restructuring arrangements in an environment of very low international interest rates, high domestic rates, and excess and growing levels of liquidity, would require some burden-sharing all around. Thus, one would have expected that interest rate restructuring would have been part of new bank-client support arrangements. This would make both good banking and larger economic sense. After all some downward adjustment of lending rates, even if temporary, could mean the difference between a non-performing loan and one that is being serviced, albeit with difficulty. But the present

stance of some of the banks is to insist that even the miserly decrease in interest rates that is extended to new loans, must be withheld from existing outstanding loans. It is a beggar-thy-customer policy that is not supportive of recovery and progress in the prevailing circumstances.

But the idea today is not to hector anyone. So I will merely make the following observation, using my best diplomatic-speak: Commercial banks may wish to use the current opportunity, in which methods of treating with poor-performing loans are being discussed with the Central Bank, to make meaningful proposals. Such proposals could include interest rate adjustment in the context of loan work-out approaches for qualifying borrowers.

While the Central Bank has been paying a great deal of attention to the stability and efficiency of banking and financial system operations, including the operations of the credit unions, it has not been neglecting its larger development functions. I therefore wish to report on two initiatives that are currently well under way. The first is, with assistance from the IFC, the establishment of a credit bureau. Details of the proposed arrangements will be made available for comment and discussion as soon as they reach an appropriate stage. The second initiative is the establishment of a national payments system to facilitate electronic single-card funds transfers and business transactions throughout the country. This will reduce the need for cheques and cash, and for businesses to operate multiple card-swiping terminals. Again, external assistance is being provided.

Regarding our road infrastructure, there can be

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no question that the current condition of our streets and roads leaves a lot to be desired. But there is also a great deal that is being done. The Northern Road network is benefitting from much improvement under the EU funding connected to the Accompanying Measures for Sugar. Infrastructure can also be looked at under the Banana Belt Rural Development Initiative, and the bridges at Kendal, Mullins River and Middlesex have been or are being financed. One pesky little issue underlined in the discussions was the need for road-marking and edging. The Ministry of Works has already started with the Northern Highway in the vicinity of the Tower Hill sugar factory; and I promise to do something in the next few weeks with the stretch between Ladyville and Belize City.

In relation to the streets in our municipalities there is the World Bank Infrastructure Project that was to start this month, but which has been delayed some because of the usual nickel and diming of that august institution. However, major Southside operations are starting just about now in Belize City, and Northside drainage works will begin in January or February.

There is a broader issue I believe we should be looking at, and it is this: whether the appropriate technical and financial capacity to build and maintain streets and drains can optimally exist in each of our separate municipalities, or whether it ought to be centralized. While such a notion would appear to raise a question regarding the appropriate range and scope for local government activities, it is in fact entirely consistent with the contracting out of particular services, as in the case

of garbage collection in Belize City. But that is perhaps a discussion for another time.

In relation to the general statistics and public finances data availability issues, I have asked the Government representatives on the Board of the Statistical Institute of Belize to get some action from the management of the SIB. Since private sector nominees are also on that Board, there should be a consensus insistence on better. Of course, the compilers of the data have to depend on submissions from a number of agencies. But that has not stopped the Central Bank, for example, from producing monthly reports that are both comprehensive and fairly timely.

In relation to public finances, I have instructed the Ministry of Finance to prepare and circulate quarterly summaries. You should also be aware that, in keeping with the Regulations we promulgated under the Finance and Audit Reform Act, there are certain reporting requirements that will become obligations of the Minister of Finance beginning in 2012. Since taking office this Administration has actively sought to close the loopholes that permitted the very poor management of the public finances that was the norm in the past, and we have benefitted from a number of reviews of our public finances management and expenditure systems. Most important, perhaps, is the fact that we have recently requested a diagnostic of our taxation system, with a view to its simplification and rationalization. We, like you, are anxiously awaiting the outcome of that exercise.

In terms of the management of the public finances one important task is still to be completed, and



Carla Barnett, Advisor to the Prime Minister

that is the full integration of the public sector investment programming processes with the budget processes. This would allow public finances management as a whole to become explicitly focused on country development; and recurrent budgetary operations to be guided by the country's development needs, rather than being treated as a standalone annual exercise. This will require not only coordination between the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Economic Development, but also close cooperation between the Ministry of Economic Development and all the line ministries.

I have raised the development concessions issue with BELTRAIDE, and the new Board of Directors is streamlining and shortening the process. It will also be making recommendations for a specific Fiscal Incentive program to suit small and medium enterprises, and which will be more sector specific.

At a broader level there are three other issues I must address. The first issue has to do with the perception that has been expressed about an apparent absence of development planning and focus. The

UDP Manifesto, issued prior to the 2008 elections, sets out a detailed programme that the Party intended to implement. This Manifesto had been developed following widespread consultations with the people, and came out of our own observations as we travelled the length and breadth of Belize. The Manifesto was not structured in the traditional form of a development plan since a party manifesto and a country development plan are two different documents and are intended for different audiences. Subsequently, however, the Ministry of Economic Development prepared and published a Medium-Term Development Strategy that drew

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Turning the Corner



Attentive Businessmen during the P M's address

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heavily on the Manifesto, but which also took account of ongoing programmes, activities and challenges.

This Medium-Term Strategy is what currently informs the Government's public sector investment programme.

More recently, we have commissioned work on a longer-term development vision for the country, and we expect, beginning in the near future, to be able to use this Horizon 2030 as a basis for more detailed development planning. While all this has been in progress, the Government's Press Office has been keeping the nation informed, through special presentations and through the TV programme "Belmopan Weekly", about Government's accomplishments and activities.

The second issue is related to the first, and it has to do with the need for Government to enter into a more comprehensive ongoing dialogue with the private sector and for the establishment of a framework to address particular issues as they arise. We would expect a more general discussion at the policy level, while specific areas would be actioned by technical committees established for that purpose. It would be useful to have your

views on how these arrangements could be structured.

The third and most important issue involves how we, all of us, go about the business of expanding production in, and exports from, Belize. For it is only through increased output and sales growth that we can hope to boost profits and boost employment and incomes.

Traditionally, the private sector has been the engine of growth, while the public sector has concentrated on providing the enabling environment in the form of the physical and institutional support infrastructure. Increasingly, however, based on some of the comments that are being made in rela-

tion to a need for more direction from Government, it appears that the paradigm may have to shift a little.

The public sector may have to take more of a lead in identifying, marketing and bringing to fruition the business and investment possibilities that are likely to attract private sector interest. Thus, the Ministry of Foreign Trade, the Ministry of Economic Development and the Ministry of Agriculture will all have to step up.

The point is that Belize has much scope for innovation and non-traditional activity. I believe this is particularly so in agro-industry and services, especially business services. But if Government is to do more, the private sector will have to hold hands with us.

Hopefully today is the start of a new joint enterprise. One where, among other things, you will help us to identify the new spaces and opportunities in relation to which Government and Public Officers can become more accommodative, more facilitative, more aggressively empowering of business and enterprise. So a clarion call needs to go out now. Attitudes must be changed; initiatives

must be grasped; openings must be created. And Government must be ready to put in place the practical and psychological arrangements not just to buttress but to muscularize the private sector.

Of course, the foremost objective of Government is always improvement in the welfare and conditions of all Belizeans. So that benefits from the sustained business expansion that we now seek, should also be made to flow to the ordinary citizen, especially the poor. In this connection we rely on the fact that a rising private sector tide will inevitably float all boats.

But we will ever want to ensure that output increase and productivity acceleration also bring specific and targeted advantages to those most in need. We know that you are one with us in that regard. After all, the business community in this country is well-known for its conscience and sense of social responsibility.

I am happy, therefore, to conclude on a note of certainty that in all we do we will keep the least of our brethren well in mind.

I thank you.



Members of Belize's Private Sector, Serious about Turning the Corner

The NBA IS Back!



Over the past two decades the NBA generated over \$2 Billion in ticket sales alone [GALLO/GETTY]

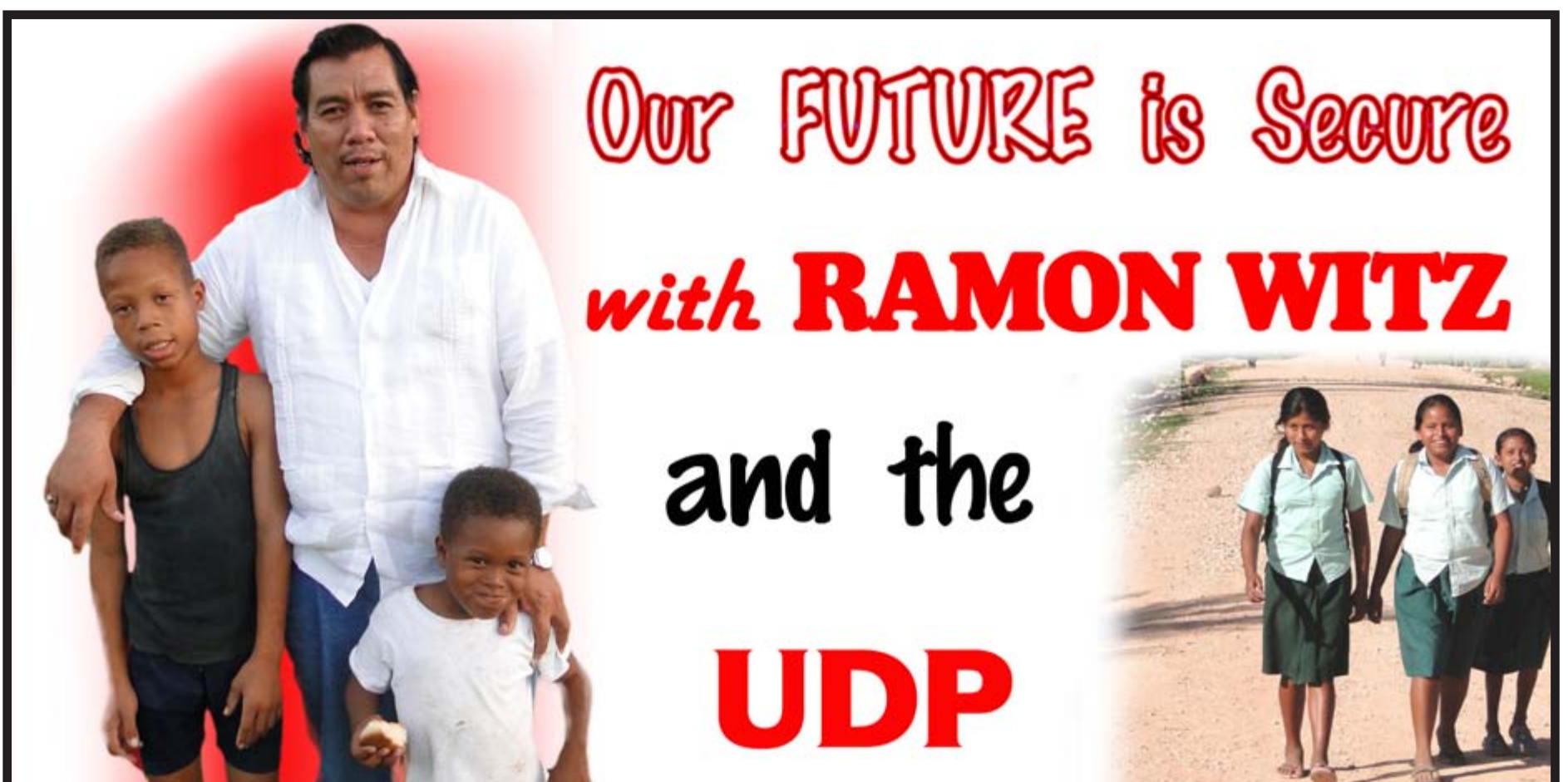
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been getting more and instead they took historic cuts. Instead, their contracts are now not fully guaranteed. Instead, they are weakened. They are weakened even though they are the game. For the millions who paid good money to watch the Chicago Bulls player Michael Jordan soar, no one ever paid a cent to see the Charlotte Hornets owner Michael Jordan molt. Athletes are different than typical workers, and not just because their paychecks tower over our own. They are different

because they fulfill the roles in production as both workers and product. They are the shoemaker and the shoe. Or, as former Washington football great Brian Mitchell said to me, "In a restaurant, a chef cooks a steak. In sports, we are the chef and we are the steaks". For 15 years, young stars picked in the draft's first round have seen their salaries constrained. Derrick Rose, the NBA's 21-year-old MVP, has the 126th highest salary in the league. On an open market, he would make maybe five times his current income. There

are also new provisions, still to be finalised, on raising the age of eligibility and whether owners will have the power to send players to their developmental league, along with dramatic salary reductions. Still, expect the players to approve it, because in the end, players spend an average of six years in the league. Giving up one-sixth of your expected earnings for your entire life was not an option. I understand that, but it didn't have to be this way. This deal is just all so very pre-Occupy Wall Street. I wish more players had

spoken out and not let David Stern's PR machine define them as "greedy millionaires, insensitive to the public's suffering in these hard economic times". I wish more had directly raised the issues of Occupy Wall Street, like 11-year veteran Etan Thomas, who wrote, "While the issues raised by the Wall Street occupiers differ from the issues of this lockout, aren't there obvious parallels in power imbalance? Who is in the same position of power as the 1 per cent? Who wants a bailout for their own mismanagement decisions? Who is more closely aligned with the corporate interests from which the Wall Street occupiers are looking to reclaim the country?" I wish they had taken their fight out of the boardroom and into the public sphere. Make no mistake, I'm an NBA junkie and I'm thrilled to be watching ball sooner rather than later. But with every game of this warped, bastardised 66-game season, I'll remember that we had a lockout where the rich got richer, the players got played and the fans didn't get a damn thing. Dave Zirin is the author of *Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games We Love* (Scribner) and just made the new documentary *Not Just a Game*. (Follow Dave Zirin on Twitter @EdgeOfSports. A version of this article was first published on *The Nation*. The views expressed in this article are the author's own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial policy.)



Prime Minister's Opening Statement at Quarterly Press Conference - Nov. 2, 2011

Electricity Rates

BEL I want to announce that I have been in touch with BEL, with the chairman of the board, and with the CEO and I have been in touch with the Public Utilities Commission. On Independence Day I had announced that BEL had in fact lifted the injunction that was in place, that Fortis, the previous majority owners had secured from the courts, which injunction prevented the Public Utilities Commission from conducting the long overdue rate-setting exercise.

Well, further to that, it's now been agreed that the rate review exercise will commence. How it operates is that BEL makes its submission to the PUC, BEL will do this by the first of December, by the first of next month. Thereafter, the PUC should have a preliminary decision by January, by early January. If there are no objections to the PUC's preliminary decision, that decision will become final within 10 or 15 days. I'm not sure of the exact time frame, but we hope to have new electricity rates, new tariffs agreed by the end of January 2012.

Now, clearly this exercise is an objective one and I can't presuppose, and I can't interfere with the discretion and authority of the Public Utilities Commission. But you don't have to be very bright to know that certainly would have insisted that the process be put in train if I did not feel very confident that, contrary to what Fortis was saying, this rate setting exercise can produce a lowering of



Prime Minister Dean Barrow

electricity rates for the Belizean people (Applause).

What happens under the law, under the regulations as they now stand is that after new rates have been fixed, there is a period that has to be gone through, there is a waiting period before the rates can take effect. Well, if at the end the exercise the news is as good as I hope it would be, we will change the law to make the new rates effective immediately upon the new rates being handed down.

Internet

Telecommunications In terms of Telemedia, I'm very happy to report that since the Internet were dropped by Telemedia, since you can now get Internet for 49 dollars per month, minus GST, we for-

mally removed the GST, as we had undertaken to do, again on Independence Day, since all that has happened, there's has been a tremendous increase in the number of Belizeans who now are utilizing the Internet, who are accessing the Internet. What has happened is that other Internet Service providers have been forced to bring down their rates as well, and so the trigger effect of what we've done, is that there is an overall climate now in which Internet rates are very much cheaper and more and more Belizeans daily are therefore signing up for Internet Services. (Applause)

Nationalization

These things are important to record because

I am thereby able to say that the Belizean people are already seeing and will continue to see concrete benefits as a result of the nationalization of the essential utilities, concrete benefits as a result of the passage of the constitutional amendment. (Applause)

Employment & Infrastructure

In terms of employment, it's important to point out to you that the south side poverty alleviation project phase two (we signed a loan in relation thereto a long time ago) is in the process of starting. The preparatory documents, the invitation to bid for the infrastructure works (remember that this will see the lining of Collet Canal from Yabra all the way down to Conch Shell Bay, it will see the full paving of the entire length of Central American Boulevard; it will see, is it Neal's Pen Road, Minister, being paved; it will see a number of the feeder streets, Ben Bow, Amara, a lot of which are in the great constituency of Queen Square, aren't they? Jane Usher, which is, unfortunately, not in the constituency of Queen Square.

But all these works are to be embarked upon, the bids are to be opened on the 8th of November, and thereafter, we will be good to go! Now, the Minister is seeking negotiate with all those that have entered bids so that we can be sure that the winners will offer employment to some of the young men that we

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Prime Minister's Opening Statement at Quarterly Press Conference - Nov. 2, 2011

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have now put to work. It's not going to be easy for Government to sustain the financial outlays that have been the cost of the employment program. So, to the extent that some of them can then be moved, so that they become part of the private sector workforce in the context of Southside poverty alleviation Phase Two, that will be a good thing.

The Ministry of Works will also do a portion of that infrastructure works, will be responsible for a portion of the program, and so the Ministry of Works will itself be able to employ about 100 to 150 under the component that it will responsible for. So, we are absolutely confident that we can continue to absorb the young men who have been involved in this program in terms of the job opportunities. Of course, ultimately, Government is committed, so whatever Government has to do to continue this program for as long as the gangs hold up their end of the bar-

gain, Government will do.

We had, separate, pioneered an initiative with CISCO Construction, which saw CISCO do the little side street between Regent Street and Albert Street in Belize City, that region of Bishop Street, using a new construction method that is labour intensive. We are going to do certainly three, maybe four more of those little streets in partnership with CISCO. We were already looking at Ferrel's Lane and South Street, but BWS I gather is doing some works on those streets and so we have to wait until they are through. The CISCO people have entered bids with respect to the Southside Phase Two, and they certainly made clear that any bid that they win, the work will be done using the new methodology, which they say doesn't send up the cost any, but which certainly helps in terms of being, as I said, very, very labour intensive.

I am to sign the loan agreement with the IDB later this week, or at the latest

very early next week, which will see the drainage program for the north side of Belize City take off; actually by the time you invite tenders and you agree scope of works and that sort of thing, we don't expect that there will actually be boots on the ground and shovels in the earth until January at the earliest, of next year. But Lee Mark Chang complained to me about a particular area in Belama, which has traditionally flooded, which is causing a great deal difficulties for the school children, that is going to be one of the priorities that will be addressed under the IDB Belize City North Side Program.

Because there's going to be this huge amount of infrastructure works on the Southside of Belize City, out of local resources we will be trying to a fair amount of street repair on the North Side of Belize City, certainly which street is it? Lizarraga Avenue, we will do something with Lizarraga Avenue; we will do something with a street or two in the

great constituency of Caribbean Shores, and generally Government will find funding for street repair, given that we've had a hell of a rainy season, and that in Belize City, in all the district towns, and indeed with respect to the highways countrywide and village streets, the infrastructure has taken a pounding, so we are embarking on countrywide program of repair. I just approved some money for the Toledo District based on a submission from the Ministry of Works.

And so, I want citizens all over this nation to know that we will be doing our very best to try rehabilitate infrastructure after the rainy season, which is not quite through yet, but we want to start sooner rather than later.

The Magazine Road, second chance project, if I can call it that, we've just approved some money so that the recurrent costs can be taken care of and so that the Minister can get on

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Members of the Local Media and Well-Wishers at Quarterly Press Conference

Prime Minister's Opening Statement at Quarterly Press Conference - Nov. 2, 2011

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with the work there, we are absolutely convinced that in terms of government resources and the kind of public spending which is necessary to help to drive things forward, in an atmosphere of global recession, we are absolutely confident that government has been doing, is doing and will continue to do more than its fair share.

Private Sector

We do acknowledge that there is a private sector lag that we have to deal with, and so through the auspices of a planning group that we have and Mr John Woods from the private sector, we are putting together a symposium, government and the private sector. The date of that is November 23. And let's see if we can agree on a number of measures that would help to stimulate private sector activity.

Land Ownership

Cabinet yesterday just approved the disbursement of about a million dollars to complete the survey and subdivision work of 3,884 residential and agricultural lots countrywide.

I'd spoken about this again on Independence Day. The Ministry of Natural Resources has now identified sufficient land to sustain 3, 884 residential and agricultural lots. We will give the survey work to different surveyors so that the exercise can be taking place simultaneously in each constituency where land is found.

There is not land in Belize City, so Belize City people will have to go outside of the city, for example we have some that we are giving out just around that Bakers Ranch area in the Sandhill sort of general vicinity, beyond the old Nova Shrimp Farm location. But 3,884 residential lots and parcels of farmland to be distributed, we expect to complete the exercise by the end of January of next year.

The Economy

I have the monthly economic report from the Central Bank for August of 2011, and I won't employ those famous last words of gentleman, if I can call him, who shall remain nameless, and say, "the

taxes are performing!", but I will tell you that government revenues are strong, our expenditures are, by and large, what they should be; if there are excesses in terms of what was budgeted, those excesses take place for the reasons that I've just talked about, things like having to find extra money for infrastructure, things like having to find extra money to sustain the gang truce program.

I know that the media has been having a look at the public information notice sent out by the IMF as a consequence of the Article Four Consultation.

Well, that's what it is, basically I'm here to tell you that what the IMF says doesn't much matter to me. We have a job to do, and their insistence on fiscal consolidation at a time of recession at a time when government needs to spend more to drive the economy because the private sector is in the doldrums, I don't really want to hear about fiscal consolidation.

But to the extent that they have had to acknowledge that, again, our revenue expenditure program, certainly on the revenue side, we have really been doing

extremely well, as a consequence of a number of factors, that is good to see that we've wrung that, we've been able to wring that out of them.

So, all in all, ladies and gentlemen. I think that we are going very well indeed, all things considered.

Housing Loans

I am very happy that on the same day that we secured passage of the Constitutional Amendment, we were able to get the House to agree to the write off of the Ministry of Housing mortgages. I know that poor people breathe a sigh of relief every time the government is able to offer something by way of poverty alleviation.

Poverty Alleviation

The Food pantry program, the conditional cash transfer program, both of them are under the Ministry of Human Development, are going well.

And, I say again that we are completely convinced that this government is proving by deeds, not words, that it is a pro-people, pro-poor government, and we're very well pleased with that.

(applause)



Cabinet Secretary James Murphy (2nd from right, front row) and Ministerial CEO's on hand

Early Elections?



P. M. Barrow at his last Press Conference leaving the question of Early Elections hanging

(Continued from Page 3)

which would certainly result in significant reductions in the cost of overseas and long distance calls to consumers, but would, just as certain, see a dramatic decline in BTL's revenues.

The PM's response was, to say the least, quite provoking, not so much to the issue at hand, but on the tantalizing question of early general elections:

"There is a continuum that we are looking at, and that continuum will inevitably include VOIP. It

is just a matter of timing and that company is looking anxiously at the whole equation to see when would be the optimum moment at which it can introduce VOIP.

The company will take a hit very clearly of its revenues, but the consumer is king, the Belizean citizen is bust and so I acknowledge freely the inevitability of the coming of VOIP.

We are grappling with the kinds of monies we would have to find, although I insist that even though

none of us knows how a court will ultimately rule on this business of compensation (the numbers that the Ashcroft people are throwing around are ridiculous), but we will have to find compensation; and so, we have to look at the ability of the company to sustain the payments in terms of the compensation that we will make.

The point is that it is complex; but let me end with respect to that particular issue by repeating that VOIP is coming.

To some extent (if I can be a little bit facetious), as soon as you hear the announcement of the coming of VOIP, expect the following day the announcement of the date of the General Elec-

tions," the PM remarked.

What does one have to do with the other? We're not absolutely sure, but perhaps what the PM was admitting is that he has not forgotten that freeing up VOIP services was a manifesto pledge of the UDP, and that he has no intentions of going back to the electorate for a new mandate before he and his government had fully delivered on their manifesto pledges.

That could, of course, spark a whole new debate, and let the chips fall where they may.

But as to the issue of whether or not there will be early General Elections, that question seems to be all up in the air—at least for now.



Capital Weekly

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



A man you all know that serves our community and country.



- ★ **SPORTS** SANTINO'S CYCLING TEAM,
SANTINO'S HOTPOINTS BASKETBALL TEAM,
SANTINO'S PLAZA MILPRO'S FOOTBALL TEAM
- ★ **CULTURE** DUETS, KTV LATINO
- ★ **MUSIC** SANTINO'S MESSENGERS, MESSENGERS BABY
- ★ **PHILANTROPIST** BEAUTIFICATION OF BUS STOP & PARKS
SCHOOL FEEDING PROGRAM
- ★ **BUSINESS** EMPLOYS OVER 500 BELIZEANS COUNTRYWIDE
- ★ **POLITICAL ACTIVIST**

WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS, SO VISIT US ON  FACEBOOK AT
SANTINO CASTILLO FOR CARIBBEAN SHORES

 **OTE SANTINO
FOR CARIBBEAN SHORES**



Convention Date is set for Dececeember 4th 2011 at Trinity Methodist School.