One year into the second term of his tenure as Prime Minister, the Honourable Dean Barrow last week read his Government’s 2013-2014 Budget Proposal. While it was presented without much pomp and circumstance, the 5.3% GDP rate of growth for the closing fiscal year reported in this Budget is absolutely phenomenal, particularly when considered within the context of the region and the World.

Our 5.3% GDP Growth rate is measurably much higher than the overall Global growth of 3.2% for 2012, which represented further slippage from the overall Global Growth rate of 3.9% recorded the previous year, 2011.

As, the Prime Minister noted in his Budget Speech, Japan slipped into recession, the Euro area’s turmoil intensified, China’s economic pace decelerated, and in the ‘great’ United States of America, the measly 2.3% growth rate they recorded in 2012 had even exceeded expectations. It is amid this broad-based sluggishness in advanced economies that our Belize Economy registered a phenomenal growth rate of 5.3%.

This accomplishment is even more remarkable when viewed in the context of the Caribbean region, where the projected 2012 outturn is for a 0.7% contraction in St. Kitts and Nevis, zero-growth in Barbados, and 0.9% growth in Jamaica.

Even in Guyana, Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago, where the news was much more encouraging (thanks to lower debt burdens, as well as a combination of natural resource wealth, domestic investments and the turnaround in tourist arrivals and remittance flows from the United States), that good news is simply that their economies grew by only 3.3%, 2.5% and 0.7%, respectively.

To use an analogy, how well the Belizean vessel is sailing is particularly amazing given the fact that we are sailing on such stormy seas. And the captain must be applauded for so skilfully and confidently navigating the ship of state through such turbulent and treacherous waters.
From the Desk of the Chairman

Whither Goeth Thou?

Delroy Cuthkelvin
Chairman, Editorial Board

Amid the good news of the Belize Economy making its way steadily across stormy regional and international seas, our communities remain in relative social turmoil, not too clear, it seems, about where we want to go.

The Prime Minister and his Government were elected to reverse economic crisis and erosion of confidence in the management of our Nation’s affairs, a macro situation that was affecting every aspect of our lives and threatening our very existence as an independent state.

The 2013-2014 National Budget, recording a growth rate of 5.3 percent in the closing fiscal year, projecting continued growth in the year ahead, and keeping all national and human development programs intact, without adding any new taxes, is proof positive that the Prime Minister and his Government are delivering well on that mandate. That our Economy and the overall management of our Nation’s affairs are back on track and heading in the right direction, is a given.

Where the waters remain murky is on the social front. In so many ways, over so many years, we seemed have lost our way as a people, having come loose of our moorings. No amount of Government policies and programs can completely fix that.

Just as it is with the question of whether or not to go to the ICJ, the momentous and existential questions that confront us in 2013 will have to be grappled with and decided on by each of us. It’s a judgement call for every individual; and we will all be held accountable and be subjected to the consequences of the decisions that we make.

What is also true, is that our destiny as a people is all wrapped together, inextricably so; and if we are to move forward as a Nation, we must do so in unity, if not uniformity. Whither goeth thou?
One Month in Charge
Commander Discusses State of BDF

Brigadier General David Jones speaking with Love FM and Love TV’s Marion Ali

Local Press:
What kind of challenges has the BDF been having since your taking over command?

Brigadier General Jones:
Today has marked exactly a month, because I took over the reins, today is the 28th, the shortest month in the year. And what I have been doing so far is making checks on exactly what resources the BDF has, making checks on exactly what are the resources that we need, and looking at the structure of what the BDF currently has, and then revising, starting to revise towards creating the structure that we need. Because, with the current threats that we have, we don’t believe that we are structured the best way. So we are going to revise our structure and then look at either increasing the size of the force, or structuring it differently so that we can actually meet the threats that we are now facing.

Local Press:
But, in relation to budgetary confinement, sometimes the BDF officers don’t have the necessary equipment they need because of budgetary cuts. How do you address that?

Brigadier General Jones:
At the moment, with the budget exercise we went through, it seems that they (the Government) are NOT going to be really unkind to us this year. I think we might get even a little increase; there is always a need for more equipment. As you know the government and the country is not in the financial situation that we would like. We need to make the best of the budget that we get, and make the best of the resources that we have. But for the moment now, what we’re doing is just ensuring and being cognizant of exactly what we have, and look at exactly what we need, and then focus our budget to get in what we really need to meet the current threats that the BDF is facing and will face in the future.

Local Press:
Are the BDF soldiers over extended, because they have to act as “Military Police” Force as well as jungle officers?

Brigadier General Jones:
I would prefer to say they are working at a higher operation tempo than expected. The soldiers, apart from the duties along the border, we have to assist the Police as well. It is something that has been decided by the Government. Our primary purpose is for the defense of the Country, making sure that our national territorial integrity and sovereignty is intact. And we spend most of our time doing that job along the border. However, the country is now in a situation where crime is probably the main national concern in the country, and it is a good decision to have the BDF assist in fighting it. It is not what the soldier has directly signed up for, but it’s a mission which we must chip in to assist, because it is for the national interest of the country, and that’s why we are here.

Potable Water Coming to Indian Church and San Carlos

Hon. Senator, Godwin Hulse, Minister of Rural Development, applauds with school children at the launching of the Indian Church Rural Water System

Over 105 families in the northern villages of Indian Church and San Carlos in the Orange Walk District will soon bid farewell to old water hand pumps and hand-dug wells thanks to a Social Investment Fund project, which will supply quality, potable water to both villages. The project was officially launched last Friday, March 8th at 10 am in the village of Indian Church. Both Indian Church and San Carlos Villages are poor communities with 37% of their population living below the poverty level. The villagers have been relying on wells, hand pumps and the New River Lagoon as their main sources of water for over three decades. These water sources, however, are untreated and have continuously posed health treats for water-borne diseases to the residents.

The SIF project, which will be financed by the Government of Belize at approximately $996,000 from a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), will address the water needs of both villages. The project will include the construction of an elevated ferro-concrete 20,000 gallon water tank in Indian Church, a pump house and installation of submersible pump and chlorinator, installation of a generator and a 28,000 ft network of distribution pipes. The water tank will be constructed at the highest point at the entrance of Indian Church Village. The water will be pumped to the tank and then gravity fed to the entire village households in Indian Church and San Carlos Village.

As part of the project, training will be provided to all water board members, including the operators, in the operation and management of the new water system. In addition, they will also receive training in basic accounting from the Ministry of Labor, Local Government, Rural Development, Immigration and National Emergency Management. Guest speaker at the official launching was Hon. Senator Godwin Hulse, Minister of Labor, Local Government, Rural Development, Immigration and National Emergency Management. Other speakers representates of the Social Investment Fund, the Indian Church and San Carlos Village Councils and their respective water boards.

Information and photos provided by Mike Hernandez Jr. (Sr. J.P.), Director of Public Relations of the Social Investment Fund
Ministry of National Security
Challenged But Determined!
Reviewing the Progress in 2012-2013

1. Successive annual increases in budgetary allocations for the Ministry of National Security to step up operations, purchase equipment and vehicles, last fiscal year and the new fiscal year.

2. Minister of National Security, Honourable John Saldivar completes his countrywide tour of all Police formations in the Country finishing in Stann Creek District where he visited the Intermediate Southern Formation (ISF) led from Independence, the Placencia Sub-Formation which handles the Peninsula Area, and the Dangriga Formation which is the Headquarters for the entire District.

3. Belize National Coastguard celebrates Seven Years’ anniversary, having quickly earned its reputation as a highly-skilled, well-equipped and elite outfit policing our territorial waters. Its Commander, formerly Captain John Borland, has now been promoted to the rank of Rear Admiral. The Unit recently intercepted millions of dollars worth of cocaine at sea, and led an effective operation in Northern Ambergris Caye which uncovered and uprooted heavily-armed criminal elements operating in that area.

4. The BDF Youth Cadet Corps Summer Camp (2012) in Baldy Beacon and Annual Senior Officers’ Conference in Caye Caulker, pledging to ensure budgetary allocation for adequate resources to maintain and upgrade all installations countrywide.


6. Ten new Mahindra trucks handed over to the BDF by Ministry of National Security over the past six months. New Commander of the BDF, General David Jones says the vehicles can handle very rugged terrain and are well suited for their purpose.

7. Establishment of a Correctional Facility for Juvenile offenders at Mountain Pine Ridge, to be operated by the BDF. In January, Minister of National Security, Hon John Saldivar toured the facility, which consists of over a dozen buildings, a good number of which were already renovated and ready to receive its first juvenile offenders. The Minister was accompanied by outgoing Commander, General Dario Tapia, and the commander designate at that time, Colonel David Jones, now Brigadier General Jones, who has since taken over command of the BDF.

8. New Commander, Brigadier General David Jones takes over command of BDF on February 1, 2013. He reports one month later, that under his command, the Force is undergoing comprehensive overhaul of its entire structure to meet the new challenges, demands and threats.

9. Impressive new BDF Intake #56 passes out, with 45 new soldiers, displaying exceptional physical skills, fitness and discipline.

10. New Police Station

Continued on Page 5
Ministry of National Security
Challenged But Determined!
Reviewing the Progress in 2012-2013

Continued from Page 4

inaugurated in San Roman, Orange Walk near the Belize-Mexico Border; New sub-station also built and inaugurated at Maya Beach on the Placencia Peninsula through the assistance of the Business Community in the Peninsula area.

11. Over 40 new special constables sworn in on the Placencia Peninsula (new special constables also sworn in for Dangriga and other parts of the Country); Neighbourhood Watch and Citizens on Patrol Committees formed in various parts of the country in conjunction with the Police Department and Ministry of National Security.

12. Over $200 Thousand secured from Taiwan for construction of a new Police Station in Belmopan to be jointly funded by that Government and the Belize Government.

13. Placencia upgraded to a full Police sub-formation, Memorandum of Understanding signed between Ministry of National Security, Police Department and Peninsula 20/20 Initiative for establishment of mobile check-point in the area, with support from the business community.

14. Police Barracks at Queen Street, Belize City Police Station refurbished to serve as dormitory for Police Officers stationed away from home. Similar living quarters being built and upgraded in other areas, such as San Pedro, Ambergris Caye. The Minister of National Security tours the refurbished facility and reiterates his commitment to the welfare of all Police Officers. He later visits with Sergeant Mark August who lost both legs in a motorcycle, pledging the Ministry’s support, financial and otherwise, to ensure he makes a full recovery, regains his mobility and returns to serve the Police Department in a capacity consistent with his specialized training and new physical condition.

15. Substantial upward salary adjustments for hundreds of Police Officers. Increased living and transfer allowances.

16. Over 20 additional vehicles and almost 50 motorcycles handed over to Police in all parts of the Country, most of them purchased by the Government of Belize using, complemented by donations from friendly governments such as the US and UK. The motorcycles are proving very useful in both urban and rural areas, complementing the regular vehicles.


18. Amalgamation of Scenes of Crime Unit with Forensic Science Service to form a new Department operating independently, but in coordination with the Belize Police Department to improve prosecution with scientific evidence.

Continued on Page 7
Faith Lift

Money & Power … Handle with Wisdom!

By Zelda Hill

Money and Power are two resources that most people seem to be working up insatiable appetites for more… and more… and more of these days. Their pursuit is often disguised and promoted by the label - ‘ambition’, thus provoking feelings of discontent in a person who may be apathetic towards the desire to pursue wealth and power. This desire is legitimate when motivated by a genuine concern to satisfy needs, ease suffering and improve the standard of living of self and humanity. It is when the desire for money and power are aroused by selfish and vile motives that no measure of skillful caution can limit the resulting havoc.

Even when the noblest of intentions abound, a person who obtains or is entrusted with wealth and absolute power to be used at his disposal can make grave blunders and become corrupted. Ironically, the possessor also becomes a casualty when money and power are not handled with wisdom.

God is not against acquiring money and power but the Bible warns often of the risks involved in their pursuit. Many of the main characters in the Bible were wealthy and influential men who acknowledged God as the source of their abundance and used their power constructively.

Job was the most eminent of all the men of the East through his wealth, influence and piety (Job 1:3) and Abraham, another righteous man, had an abundance of wealth including flocks, herds and servants (Genesis 12:5).

Then there is also the testimony of Jabez (1 Chronicles 4:10) who made a prayer to the God of Israel, saying, “If only I am destined for wealth and power, concluded that riches do not satisfy but only brings an increase of followers, expenditure and deprives its owners of sleep (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12).

And Jesus, whose mission was for us to enjoy life in abundance (John 10:10) reminded us of the utter futility of wealth and power when compared to the spiritual realm by posing this question to His followers: “For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul (Mark 8:36)?”

When we understand that the soul has more value than money or earthly power, we will never envy those who by a few strokes of a pen can victimize their rivals or dictate who will prosper or who will suffer during their reign.

You would truly give me a blessing, and make wider the limits of my land, and let Your hand be with me, and keep me from evil, so that I may not be troubled by it!”

God was not offended by Jabez’ request for prosperity and influence; God knew his earnest intentions and fulfilled his desires. The Bible also cautions about the lure of money and submits the plainest rationale in iTimothy 6:9-10: ‘People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

The Psalmist also counsels us not to trust in wealth because it can neither restore life nor prolong it (Psalm 49:6). The wise King Solomon, esteemed for his wealth and power, concluded that riches do not satisfy but only brings an increase of followers, expenditure and deprives its owners of sleep (Ecclesiastes 5:10-12).

And Jesus, whose mission was for us to enjoy life in abundance (John 10:10) reminded us of the utter futility of wealth and power when compared to the spiritual realm by posing this question to His followers: “For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and yet lose his own soul (Mark 8:36)?”

When we understand that the soul has more value than money or earthly power, we will never envy those who by a few strokes of a pen can victimize their rivals or dictate who will prosper or who will suffer during their reign.

Many who become drunk with power often forget that all power and authority are ordained by God yet Satan, the ruler of this world, may influence great revolutions with God’s permission. His bold offer to give Jesus the kingdoms of the world and their splendor shows that rulers, consciously or unconsciously, can receive power from Satan and become his agents (Matthew 4:9).

There are also those that God gives power to and there are those who gain it through deceit and oppression. The latter can never procure favor with God and will continue to deceive and oppress others to their own ruin. Those who gain power with God’s approval can ask God for wisdom to rule fairly and favorably. Despite the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, most people still believe that life can only be lived to the fullest when they receive just a little more money or power.

However, our Creator designed us with a spiritual vacuum that only a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ can fill and cause us to experience life in the highest sense. To crave any other substitute for contentment will only result in an endless cycle that will end in emptiness and ruin.

When Christ’s love invades our desires and we become willing to make the pursuit of God more important than the pursuit of wealth and power, we will be satisfied and furthermore, realize that only with godly wisdom can money and power be used constructively.
Ministry of National Security
Challenged But Determined!
Reviewing the Progress in 2012-2013

19. Walk-through metal-detectors and scanners are installed at the Sir Edney Cain Administration Building in Belmopan, Charles Hyde Administration Building in Belize City and Kolbe Foundation Correctional Facility in Hattieville, over $300,000 worth of equipment having been donated by the US Government;

20. New Commissioner, Allen Whylie, takes command of Police Department; accompanied by major changes in the high command for greater efficiency and effectiveness.

21. Formation and Zone Commanders in the Police are now held responsible for crime reduction in their respective jurisdictions. The Minister and his CEO along with the Commissioner are scheduled to meet with them every month so that together they can review their overall and respective performance. Those who perform well receive Minister’s Monthly Award (O C of the Month).

22. New crime-fighting offensive launched, mainly in Belize City, utilizing declaration of Special Areas (Crime-Ridden Areas) in accordance with the Crime Control and Criminal Justice Act.

23. Police Prosecution Branch strengthened with the appointment of a trained attorney to head that unit.

24. The friendly Government of India provides valuable technical support through a Senior Advisor now attached full-time to the Ministry of National Security and the Police Department.

25. Inter-Institutional Training Course in Combating Illicit Trafficking in Firearms, Ammunition and Explosives just completed at the National Police Training Academy; sponsored by United Nations Regional Center for Peace, Disarmament & Development in Latin America & the Caribbean (UN-LIREC); attended by over 44 participants from agencies such as the Belize Police Force, Belize Defence Force, National Coast Guard, Customs, Forensics Department & Scenes of Crime, Airport Security and Prisons.

News has been received of the addition to the Belmopan Bandits Football Club of Belize’s most prolific International football striker of all times, Deon MacCauley. McCauley will play his first game with the Belmopan Bandits against the Placencia Assassins this coming Saturday Night, March 16, 2013, in Belmopan, starting at 7:30 PM.

The Belmopan Bandits, defending Champions in the Premier League of Belize, are expected to be much improved with McCauleys addition to the club. Go Belmopan!
Adding Flesh to the Word

A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

This is, by my recollection, the sixth Budget I have had the honour of presenting to this Honourable House. It has always been a privilege to do so. But this one is occasion for a particular sense of accomplishment. And this is so not least because it comes almost exactly one year after the United Democratic Party won its historic consecutive second term as the national Government of our beloved Belize.

Now, the details of our stewardship in this first twelve months of the new Administration will be set out in the body of the speech. But it is as well to strike two high notes right at the start. We have pretty much done what the sceptics said was impossible. The Superbond— that bane of our existence, that monster of our nightmare— has been tackled and tamed. Not vanished, mind you, but put on a leash and confined to its lair. And as a direct consequence, but also as a result of adroit stewardship and unshakable commitment to the welfare of this nation, this Budget will see absolutely no new taxes and no overall spending cuts.

The fiscal cliff is not for us. And we likewise say no to the gospel of austerity, currently being preached and practiced with such disastrous social and political consequences in Europe.

The magnitude of our apostasy, our resistance to, and escape from, the prevailing orthodoxy, must be placed in its proper global and regional context. Especially where the Caribbean is concerned, and as we have been seeing on the news, the picture is one of almost unrelieved economic gloom. With countries all around us teetering on the brink, close to the edge, Belize’s Houdini-like performance is phenomenal good news. And it is fitting that, if all goes as expected, the superbond exchange offer would have been completed in the next couple of weeks. So that by the time we return for the Debate on the 21st and 22nd, laurels and garlands should be much in evidence and the UDP and Belize will be taking their victory lap.

Recent Economic Developments & Prospects

International and Regional Economic Developments

The pace of the global economic recovery since the financial crisis of 2008-2009 continues to be anemic and uneven. Global growth is estimated to have weakened from 3.9% in 2011 to 3.2% in 2012 amid broad-based sluggishness in advanced economies. Japan slipped into recession, the Euro area turmoil intensified, and China’s economic pace decelerated. In the United States, while a modest housing recovery supported GDP growth of 2.3% that exceeded expectations, labor market conditions remained slack and consumption failed to gain momentum.

Closer to home, several Caribbean countries were challenged by high levels of debt, rising unemployment, high import prices for energy and food and a fall-off in tourism demand from Europe in particular. Already weak balance of payments and fiscal positions, which left little room, if any, for countercyclical policies, were pushed to the brink in St. Kitts and Nevis, Barbados and Jamaica, all three of which had public debt to GDP ratios well in excess of 100%. As a result, the projected 2012 outturn is for a 0.7% contraction in St. Kitts and Nevis, zero-growth in Barbados, and 0.5% growth in Jamaica. On a more positive note, Guyana, Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago benefited from lower debt burdens as well as a combination of natural resource wealth, domestic investments and the turnaround in tourist arrivals and remittance flows from the United States to the region.

The estimated growth in these countries was 3.3%, 2.5% and 0.7%, respectively.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN BELIZE - 2012

I now turn to economic developments here at home. Preliminary estimates compiled by the Statistical Institute of Belize indicate that our economy grew by 5.3% during 2012, well above the 1.9% recorded for 2011 and just about the best in the Anglophone Caribbean. The growth is attributable to brisk activity in agriculture, agro-manufacturing, tourism, construction and telecommunications, which more than compensated for the sharp downturn in petroleum extraction, domestic electricity generation and cruise-ship disembarkations. Also, and to broaden the point about how comparatively stellar our performance was, the Central Bank reports that this growth is notably above the entire Latin American and Caribbean Region’s estimated average of 3.0%.

In the primary sector, the rehabilitation of storm-damaged acreages and favourable agronomic conditions helped banana production to increase by 39.9%, while citrus also recovered from weather-related damages to post a 14.5% increase in deliveries. A relatively uneventful season that was not plagued by the difficulties of the previous year because Government had helped to solve those problems, facilitated a 22.6% increase in sugarcane deliveries.

Continued on Page 9
Adding Flesh to the Word
A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

The strong out-turn of citrus fruit and sugarcane deliveries bolstered agro-manufacturing activity so that production of citrus juices and sugar production rose by 12.8% and 15.4%, respectively. Notably, sugar production for the 2011/2012 crop year exceeded the 100,000 long ton mark for the first time since the 2005/2006 crop; and the average price paid to farmers was adjusted upward from $68.12 to $72.12 per long ton of sugarcane. The services sector was supported by superb growth of 10.2% in arrivals of overnight tourists, with visitors from the US and Canada, Belize’s primary markets, up by 14.8% and 29.2% respectively. The performance of the overnight segment contributed to upswings across the “Wholesale and Retail Trade”, “Hotels and Restaurants” and “Transport and Communication” sub-sectors. The latter was also boosted by BTL’s investment in 4G technology.

Upswing across the communication sub-sector boosted by BTL’s investment in 4G technology

Strong out-turn of Citrus bolstered by Agro-Manufacturing activity - Production of Citrus Juices rose by 12.8%

Continued from Page 8

The strong out-turn of citrus fruit and sugarcane deliveries bolstered agro-manufacturing activity so that production of citrus juices and sugar production rose by 12.8% and 15.4%, respectively. Notably, sugar production for the 2011/2012 crop year exceeded the 100,000 long ton mark for the first time since the 2005/2006 crop; and the average price paid to farmers was adjusted upward from $68.12 to $72.12 per long ton of sugarcane. The services sector was supported by superb growth of 10.2% in arrivals of overnight tourists, with visitors from the US and Canada, Belize’s primary markets, up by 14.8% and 29.2% respectively. The performance of the overnight segment contributed to upswings across the “Wholesale and Retail Trade”, “Hotels and Restaurants” and “Transport and Communication” sub-sectors. The latter was also boosted by BTL’s investment in 4G technology. Construction activity was buoyant owing largely to public sector infrastructural projects, condominium development and residential housing construction that was fueled by the fall in interest rates on housing loans.

On the downside, four additional wells at the Spanish Lookout Field could not stabilize slipping oil production and output fell by 26.8% to 1,029,938 barrels, significantly steeper than the 10.0% annual average decline that had been project. Cruise ship disembarkations fell by 11.9% to 776,661 visitors due to fewer port calls and the use of smaller ships for the Belize route. Underpinning this decline were the expansion of routes by North American cruise lines for “Household Goods and Maintenance” and “Clothing and Footwear” were offset by increases for other categories, the most sizable being the 4.2% for “Medical Care” and 3.0% for “Personal Care”.

The External Sector

On the external front, the balance of payments current account deficit widened for the first time in three years to approximately 2.7% of GDP. The merchandise trade deficit rose by 23.3% or $81.3 million as imports grew at a faster pace than exports. Most of the growth in imports was due to a $162.8 million increase in goods for domestic consumption that included higher outlays on diesel fuel, heavy machinery, cement imports and electricity. Total exports went up by $43.1 million, reflecting increases of $53.9 million in commercial free zone sales and $14.5 million in re-exports. Domestic exports, on the other hand, declined by $25.3 million as significantly lower petroleum and papaya revenues more than offset gains from sugar, banana and citrus. Other notable developments on the current account included an increase in net inflows from services due to the excellent performance of the overnight tourist segment; a reduction in net outflows in the form of profit repatriation; and lower inflows from transfers such as family remittances.

The surplus on the cap-

Continued on Page 10

The surplus on the cap-

Continued on Page 10

Rehabilitation of storm-damaged acreages and favorable agronomic conditions helped Banana production to increase by 39.9%,

Central Bank of Belize - $105.6 Million increase in the Gross International Reserves to $577.8 million Equivalent to 4.6 months of merchandise imports

Looking ahead for 2013, prices of key inputs are expected to be moderate with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) rising by an annual average of 1.3% compared to the 1.5% increase in the previous year. The services sector was supported by superb growth of 10.2% in arrivals of overnight tourists, with visitors from the US and Canada, Belize’s primary markets, up by 14.8% and 29.2% respectively. The performance of the overnight segment contributed to upswings across the “Wholesale and Retail Trade”, “Hotels and Restaurants” and “Transport and Communication” sub-sectors. The latter was also boosted by BTL’s investment in 4G technology. Construction activity was buoyant owing largely to public sector infrastructural projects, condominium development and residential housing construction that was fueled by the fall in interest rates on housing loans.

On the downside, four additional wells at the Spanish Lookout Field could not stabilize slipping oil production and output fell by 26.8% to 1,029,938 barrels, significantly steeper than the 10.0% annual average decline that had been project. Cruise ship disembarkations fell by 11.9% to 776,661 visitors due to fewer port calls and the use of smaller ships for the Belize route. Underpinning this decline were the expansion of routes by North American cruise lines for “Household Goods and Maintenance” and “Clothing and Footwear” were offset by increases for other categories, the most sizable being the 4.2% for “Medical Care” and 3.0% for “Personal Care”.

The External Sector

On the external front, the balance of payments current account deficit widened for the first time in three years to approximately 2.7% of GDP. The merchandise trade deficit rose by 23.3% or $81.3 million as imports grew at a faster pace than exports. Most of the growth in imports was due to a $162.8 million increase in goods for domestic consumption that included higher outlays on diesel fuel, heavy machinery, cement imports and electricity. Total exports went up by $43.1 million, reflecting increases of $53.9 million in commercial free zone sales and $14.5 million in re-exports. Domestic exports, on the other hand, declined by $25.3 million as significantly lower petroleum and papaya revenues more than offset gains from sugar, banana and citrus. Other notable developments on the current account included an increase in net inflows from services due to the excellent performance of the overnight tourist segment; a reduction in net outflows in the form of profit repatriation; and lower inflows from transfers such as family remittances.

The surplus on the cap-

Continued on Page 10

Rehabilitation of storm-damaged acreages and favorable agronomic conditions helped Banana production to increase by 39.9%,
Adding Flesh to the Word!

A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

Heritage Bank Limited, one of Belize’s Commercial institutions: “At end of the year, commercial bank holdings of cash and statutory liquid balances were respectively 81.7% and 61.3% above required levels”

Continued from Page 9

ital and financial account was notably larger. Foreign direct investments during 2012 stood at an unprecedented $386.6 million, well above the $289.4 million recorded in 2011 and higher than the $360.0 million registered in 2008. The Leader of the Opposition and his cohort of naysayers will no doubt take note. And indeed it more than compensated for lower official capital flows and an increase in commercial banks’ net foreign asset holdings abroad. The most significant of these flows went to the Agriculture and Aquaculture sector (38.4%) and Real Estate Activities (24.7%). The net result was a $105.6 million increase in the gross international reserves to $57.7 million, which was equivalent to 4.6 months of merchandise imports.

Monetary & Financial Developments

Reflective of the strong economic performance, the broad money supply expanded by 11.0%, led by higher foreign inflows and supplemented by growth in credit to the private sector, which occurred even after taking into account $373.3 million in loan write-offs during the year. Most of the credit went towards personal financing and the building and construction subsector. The build-up in net foreign assets was largely attributable to elevated inflows from foreign direct investment and tourism even as the external current account deficit widened. The accumulation of foreign assets and credit growth contributed to the continued rise in cash and statutory bank liquidity. At the end of the year, commercial bank holdings of cash and statutory liquid balances were respectively 81.7% and 61.3% above required levels.

The high level of liquidity facilitated a 103 basis points fall in the weighted average lending rate to 11.90% as all loan categories recorded rate cuts, with the most notable being 139 basis points for residential construction and 129 basis points for personal loans. The weighted average deposit rate also fell to 2.55% (the lowest level since 1977) chiefly due to a 142 basis points spread increase in the weighted average lending rate. As a result, the weighted average spread increased by 7 basis points to 9.44%. I should at this juncture, Mr. Speaker, note that since December 2008, the weighted average lending rate has fallen by 211 basis points and, the weighted average deposit rate went down by 380 basis points. Accordingly, the weighted average interest rate spread increased by 169 basis points during the period.

Credit unions continue to play a leading role in Belize’s development. Lending by the five largest credit unions rose by $36.2mn to $403.0 million during 2012, and this was almost twice the $20.8 million recorded for 2011. The loans extended for agriculture, individuals, real estate and residential construction overshadowed the repayments for home improvement and manufacturing. The quality of the credit union sector’s loan portfolio continues to improve, and as of December 2012, the NPLs ratio fell well below the 5.0% threshold to 3.5%.

I will address the developments on the debt later on in this presentation.

ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR 2013

Price stability is one of the principal benefits of the fixed exchange rate and while increasing international prices for basic food commodities such as grains (used as feed for cattle, chicken etc.) is likely to be a factor, the projected rise in the Consumer Price Index remains a moderate 2.5% for 2013. GDP growth is projected to decelerate to about 3.0% in 2013 due to the lessening impact of the factors that boosted activity in 2012. As in the case of our regional counterparts, the Belizean economy is vulnerable to commodity price shocks and weather-related setbacks and is also dependent on the growth performance of external trading partners.

The GDP growth projection therefore assumes that a gradual upturn in global growth to 3.5% will continue, especially through tourism, to support the economy’s tertiary sector that includes retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communication. The projection is also premised on the assumption that overnight tourism expansion will settle at 4.5% due to continued fragility and weak employment in Belize’s primary market, the United States. But the projection is conservative since the ramping up of marketing efforts by the Belize Tourism Board has the potential to boost the number of visitors to Belize notwithstanding America’s travails.

The primary sector is likely to backlash to low single digit growth due to a return to normal crop cycles and a forecast downturn in citrus output. Last year was an unusual one with the significant double-digit growth in agriculture and agro-processing coming as a rebound after the poor banana, citrus and sugarcane crops of 2010/2011. The expectation is therefore that there will be a return to normal crop cycles and growth patterns in 2013. One caution, however, is that citrus may be facing headwinds from lower international prices and a cyclical crop downturn. On the upside sugarcane should benefit from technological and knowledge-based transfers from American Sugar Refining; and a solid banana crop is expected.

Also, despite the projected 10.0% contraction in petrochemical extraction and low reservoir levels at the hydro dams, the projection is conservative. Market conditions, the United States. But caution, however, is that citrus may be facing headwinds from lower international prices and a cyclical crop downturn. On the upside sugarcane should benefit from technological and knowledge-based transfers from American Sugar Refining; and a solid banana crop is expected.

GDP Growth projection assumes gradual upturn in global growth to 3.5% will continue, especially through tourism, to support the Economy’s tertiary sector which includes retail trade, hotels and restaurants, and transport and communication.
Adding Flesh to the Word!
A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

Continued from Page 10

the year ahead even as credit to the private sector expands at a similar pace as 2012. The high levels of excess liquidity should act as a de facto ceiling on interest rates, which are not expected to increase in 2013. Heightened supervision and regulatory oversight of the financial and banking system should continue to build on gains achieved to date and further improve the stability, soundness and resiliency of the financial institutions.

BUDGET PERFORMANCE IN FISCAL YEAR 2012/2013 PROJECTED OUT-TURN

The projected outturn for Fiscal Year 2012/2013 indicates that Central Government post-
non-payment of BTL dividends. However, one-off inflows in the form of loan repayments from BSI, BTL and DFC helped to overshadow the lower receipts from the petroleum sector.

Expenditure Performance

The Government’s total expenditure for FY 2012/13 is projected at $862.2 million, which was 8.1% below budget. The reduced outlay was attributed to the lower interest payments made as a consequence of the liability management exercise that we undertook during the course of this fiscal year. The two primary components of the expenditure are Current Expenditures of $706.8 million or 82% of total expenditures; and Capital Expenditures of $155.4 million or 18% of total expenditure.

Revenue Performance

Total revenue and grants are projected to be $844.9 million, almost $20 million below budget, as a 0.6% increase in tax revenue was outweighed by declines in non-tax revenue, capital revenue and grant receipts.

The lower than expected performance in revenue collections reflected a $5.6 million shortfall in receipts from the local petroleum industry and the

Continued on Page 12
Adding Flesh to the Word
A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

Continued from Page 11

increasingly long shadow over our entire society, but especially our urban youth. We will not slacken in our resolve to restore sanity and safety to our Cities, Towns and Communities.

In this new budget we have accordingly pledged more resources to our police and security forces, to provide more weapons, vehicles, and surveillance and communication equipment. At the same time, we will upgrade our intelligence-gathering capabilities. We will strengthen the coordination between the Ministry of National Security, the Attorney General’s Ministry, and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecution, all in a concerted effort toward more effective crime investigation, prosecution and conviction.

Education

With the assistance of our development partners, we will continue to implement reforms in education financing and in teacher education and curriculum development. All this with the intention of ensuring more access and improved quality in the education system, particularly at the secondary level. At the same time we maintain our support to tertiary level education, and certainly to our national University of Belize.

Health

In this budget, we will

Providing Health Care for those who most need it:
“In this budget, we will protect the level of funding for the National Health Insurance”

Protect the level of funding for the National Health Insurance. We will also provide the counterpart resources for two major initiatives supported by the World Bank and the IDB for primary health care and education especially in the southern districts.

Physical Infrastructure

We will continue to expand and upgrade the primary and secondary road network throughout Belize, and allocate as much as we can toward the all-important maintenance of streets and drains. In this regard, the Ministry of Works has articulated a Maintenance Plan for the road network countrywide. We have secured funding from the CDB for a new Road Safety Project for the George Price Highway; funding from the IDB for the Drainage Project for the Northside of Belize City; and from the World Bank for the Municipal Infrastructure Project. The latter is already in full implementation in many district towns.

SUMMARY OF THE DRAFT ESTIMATES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2013/2014

The draft estimates have been prepared on the assumption that nominal GDP will grow, in real terms, by about 3.0% over the fiscal year just ended, reflecting projected increases in the primary and services sectors and continued strong public sector investment especially in road and bridge infrastructure.

Continued on Page 13
Adding Flesh to the Word
A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”
“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

Continued from Page 12

As a worst case scenario, we are also assuming a moderate 2.5% rise in Consumer Price Index. This may, though, be tempered by the forecast sharp decline in world oil prices later this year.

The proposed Budget targets a preliminary Primary Surplus of 1.0% of GDP and an Overall Deficit of 1.9% of GDP.

Total Expenditure is estimated at $934.3 million while Total Revenue and Grants are projected at $871.1 million. When taken together, this results in an Overall Deficit of $63.2 million, or about 1.9% of GDP.

To this figure we must add a further $64.5 million for Loan Amortization requirements, and so arrive at the Total Financing Needs of $127.1 million. These financing needs will be met from the following sources:

Disbursement of $54.8 million from Loans already contracted with our multi-lateral development partners to fund our Capital III Expenditure Program;

Disbursement of $20.0 million in budget support financing from the Republic of China (Taiwan) under the on-going bi-lateral economic cooperation program;

And, a combination of domestic borrowing and drawdown of GOB deposits in the banking system in the amounts of $32.2 million and $20.0 million respectively.

I would like to note that we continue to finance the majority of our needs through the use of funds contracted on highly concessionary terms and that we are again this year, as in the past six years, refraining from any commercial borrowing.

ESTIMATES OF REVENUE 2013/2014

The Draft Estimates of Revenue and Grants amount to $871.1 million for FY 2013/14 and are comprised of $825.6 million in Recurrent Revenue, $5.1 million in Capital Revenue and $41.1 million in Grants.

This represents a rise of $26.9 million in Total Revenue and Grants over the estimated out-turn for the current fiscal year, and of which some $17.0 million is attributed to an increase in Recurrent Revenue.

The increase comes, not from any new taxes measures, as indeed there are none this year, but rather from an expected improvement in tax administration, especially from improvement in Customs duties collections utilizing the newly implemented ASYCUDA system, and improvements in assessments and auditing in both the General Sales Tax and Business and Income Tax regimes.

I interject here again that we expect redoubled Public Officer collection efforts since the salary increases hang in this particular balance.

We hope to appoint a working committee of Ministers and Union Reps to monitor progress in this regard, and we are contemplating the possibility of naming an efficiency Czar to act as the committee’s point person. While we are projecting a small net increase in recurrent revenues, this masks the continued decline in petroleum revenues and also a sharp fall-off in inflows from the Repayment of Old Loans, some of which were fully liquidated in the 2012-2013 fiscal year.

Sources of Government’s $871.7 million Income in Financial Year 2013/14

As we have been warning for some time now, the natural decline in the production of oil from the Spanish Lookout field continues. We expect a decline of a further 10% in the coming year. The production from the Never Delay Field remains at a small and steady flow but is not enough to compensate for the significant slowdown from the Spanish Lookout field.

There are a number of exploratory wells being drilled in the Northwest and others planned for the South. But while the seismic studies yield promising data, the hard reality is that we have not yet discovered any new reserves.

Since there is no room for wishful thinking in the already dismal science of economics, we do the prudent and responsible thing and arrange our fiscal affairs assuming that there will be NO additional revenue from this sector in the upcoming year.

ESTIMATES OF RECURRENT EXPENDITURE 2013/2014

The Draft Estimates of Recurrent Expenditure is proposing a total of $778.0 million in recurrent expenditure up by $71.2 million from the projected outturn of $706.8 million for FY 2012/13.

ESTIMATES OF CAPITAL EXPENDITURE 2013/2014

My Government is proposing to allocate some $156.3 million to its capital program in the upcoming fiscal year. The locally funded Capital II Program is estimated at $67.2 million while the externally funded Capital III Program will receive an allocation of $86.0 million.

In the Capital III Program provisions have been
Continued from Page 13

made for the following employ-ment-generating, growth stim-ulating projects:

For the Upgrading of Roads, Streets and Drains:
$0.6 million from the OPEC Fund, the Kuwait Fund, and CABEI for the continuation of the upgrading of the Southern Highway between Big Falls and the Belize/Guatemala Boarder. It is expected that this project will be substantially completed by the end of the upcoming fiscal year and that the economic impact to the area and the increase in cross-border trade will be dramatic.

$0.5 million from the CDB for the new Macal River Crossing, including the upgrading of the La Loma Luz Boulevard and the Joseph Andrews Drive leading to the new bridge site.

$3.0 million from the CABEI for the new Corozal Border Crossing Reconstruction Project to upgrade facilities and infrastructure at the second Belize/Mexico Bridge, including access roads, security fencing and lighting, and parking.

$0.6 million from the World Bank for the Belize Municipal Development Project to improve access to basic municipal infrastructure and to enhance municipal management in selected towns and city councils.

For Education and Health and Social Protection:
$1.5 million from donor funds administered by the IDB for the Mesoamerican Health Initiative to improve the health of women and children in the Corozal, Orange Walk and Cayo Districts.

$0.5 million from the World Bank for Improving Health and Nutrition in local Mayan Communities in the Toledo District.

$2.0 million from the CDB for the Youth and Community Transformation Project on the Southside of Belize City including the construction of a Youth and Community Resource Center as well as programs to reduce vulnerability of children to crime and gang membership.

For the Environment and Tourism: $5.0 million from the IDB for the Sustainable Tourism Project to continue work on the visitors facilities in Belize City, San Ignacio and Placencia, and improvement to the Mayan sites at Xunantunich, Cahal Pech, and the ATM Cave site.

$6.0 million from the IDB for the Solid Waste Management Project to complete the sanitary landfill site on the George Price Highway and to begin construction on the transfers station at the Belize City dump site.

And for Agriculture: $7.1 million from the European Union for the National Cattle Sanitary Program (the Cattle Sweep Program), for assistance to the Banana Industry, and for the strengthening of the Sugar Industry Research and Development Institute (SIRDI).

I would like to point out that while these numbers may sound ambitious, in fact they are well within our capacity to implement this coming year and we are confident that we will do so. And as a point of reference, the outturn for the current year shows that we achieved and slightly exceeded the global Capital III spending targets.
Adding Flesh to the Word
A Budget Belizeans Can “Feel”

“Achieving Debt Sustainability, Stimulating Economic expansion”

Continued from Page 14

our willingness now to finance the 10% down payment for new homeowners seeking construction financing from commercial institutions.

In all this we have been forthcoming in embracing and promoting indeed proselytizing the role of the state in driving economic development; in stimulating demand; in stepping into the breach always, but especially when there is any slackening of private sector activity. It has been our practical and philosophical conviction that big government is a necessity for small countries.

We will therefore continue to ramp up the public sector investment programme. We will continue to fund robustly the infrastructure projects that create employment, better the physical conditions of our people and I can’t say it enough stimulate demand.

It is that last, the stimulation of demand, that allows me to segue into the paramount importance that we attach to the partnership between Government and the Business Community. For in the end that is what the stimulation of demand is all about creating jobs, increasing disposable income, trading more goods, expanding the supply chain, accelerating the activity that will in turn feed on itself, replicate and multiply; and ultimately, in consequence, push the private sector into its deserved and necessary pride of place.

When we talk about the private sector we talk about the entire private sector, whether organized in large business ventures (as in our major agricultural and industrial exporting companies) or in medium and small enterprises. We talk about our hotels, restaurants, bus and taxi operators. We talk about our farmers, fishermen, street vendors, tour operators. We talk about the service providers such as tutors, hair braiders, language translators, artists, musicians.

These are the people who, through the sale of their goods and services, generate the jobs and produce the incomes, part of which is used by the Government to deliver social services, to reinvest, to make sure that the wheel comes full circle: that the environment is maintained and strengthened in which these same individuals and enterprises can operate even more successfully, can prosper by leaps and bounds and help move our country forward.

Government is in its own right an employer, an investor, a direct social and economic guardian of the people. But it is also a facilitator and motivator of the private sector. And one of its main purposes is to provide the maximum possible help and support so that Business can play a paramount role in helping to achieve national development objectives and improve our standard of living.

It is in recognition of all this that I have tried, beginning in late 2011, to intensify the relationship between the Government and the private sector through the convening of the Business Forum. The idea was to establish a medium for dialogue as a way of achieving and maintaining a close understanding of what each sector needs to do to assist the other in growing our economy and providing more jobs and higher incomes for our people.

The Business Forum is the umbrella entity designated to superintend the new process. In between its annual meetings, though, there is a need for operational continuity. And this has been filled by a joint private-public sector Committee, which meets every three weeks to identify and deal with issues and bottlenecks that are obstacles to the expansion of private sector activity. It also looks at the internal workings of the private sector and tries to arrange for changes in the way business is done so as to maximize results.

Among the accomplishments of this ongoing private-public sector dialogue have been the following:

The comprehensive review of Belize’s tax system about which I earlier spoke. We have already received a preliminary report from the external advisers, and we are currently awaiting their detailed recommendations for changes.

Continuing consultations on a programme of public service reform, with the intention of improving the quality of public services delivery and of making the interactions between the public service and members of the general public as efficient and as pleasant as possible. This process is critical to business facilitation.

Consideration of proposals to review the entire transportation sector, including seaport and airport operations as well as road development and improvement, in order to optimize the delivery of services and reduce the costs of moving people and goods throughout the country and within the region.

The involvement of the private sector in the development of education and training curricula, given the recognition that our education and training institutions must increasingly produce individuals with the skills and capacities that permit them to become both employees or self-employed entrepreneurs.

The establishment by Government in Belize City of the first of a series of small and medium-sized business support centers, with the intention to branch out to every municipality. Along with these, we have been engaging with the financial institutions and with the utility services in an effort to encourage them to provide special assistance packages to small business operations, in particular to new start-ups.

Membership of both sides in the wider social partner structure set up to address the troubling crime situation that has affected business operations in the country.

I believe it is fair to say that this public-private sector approach has to date produced benefits for both sectors and for the country of Belize in general. The distrust of one side for “the other” has been greatly reduced. And there is much commonality in defining objectives and the way to realize these, even if there is not as yet maximum symmetry of implementation.

Members of the Productive Sector listening to Prime Minister Dean Barrow at his first Business Forum titled Turning the Corner
Police Change Of Command

National Police Training Academy, Belmopan, January 9, 2013
BDF Change Of Command

Price Barracks, Ladyville, Friday, February 1, 2013
The Team TO Tackle The Trade
Of Illegal Firearm, Ammunition and Explosives

Address by Colonel George Lovell

A couple weeks ago, I had the privilege of representing Belize at a conference that was organized by the Latin American and Caribbean group of friends to look at a draft of arms trade treaty that was submitted by the president of the UN conference on the arms trade treaty, Ambassador Peter Walcott.

The group of friends included representatives from Peru, Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, Australia Canada, El Salvador, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, and Jamaica, the Bahamas and Belize.

It was a two day conference that I attended and during those two days, there were several proposals that were made to refine a strategic plan and some terms of reference that was to be submitted to the next UN Conference some time later in this month in New York. There was a high degree of confidence among the various participants of that group. The intervention that we had over those two days will place a strong text at the UN conference on arms trade treaty that I spoke to earlier.

The group underlined the need to prevent, to combat and to eradicate illicit trade of conventional arms and to prevent their diversion to the illicit market and for authorized end-users. It also recognized the security, social and economic and human consequences of the illicit trade in an unregulated trade of conventional arms especially as it is related to the avoidance of it contributing to human suffering. (And I note that you echoed the same sentiment.)

It is pleasing to note that the various modules over the past ten days that you all as participants went through, speak to the very same concerns and concepts that the United Nation’s Arms Trade is seeking to achieve.

Let me sincerely congratulate you for your achievement, for successfully completing this course, and for the work that I anticipate you will all do as you go back to your various units. I believe that you are now a team; and I say this because while your participation over the past ten days has reached this culminating point, you have completed this training on combating the illicit trading in firearms, ammunition and explosives, and in doing so, if nothing else, you have established among yourselves and our local players the level of contact that is needed to form this team that I speak of. So I believe that ten days have caused us to form that team.

The skills that were transferred to you, the participants, from the facilitators in time I believe will be applied to the everyday functions of the various departments that are represented here today. It is my hope that in a very short time, this training will be able to enhance our institutional cooperation, it will strengthen our networks and develop even better contacts than we have established over the past ten days that will be used to prevent and combat the illicit firearms trafficking. While I am hopeful that these deliverables will be achieved, I am mindful of the fact that the effectiveness of this team that I speak of will be dependent on the individual members of the team; trust, integrity, professionalism and cooperation amongst all will be needed for this to work. And I would ask that this be used as the hallmark for our various activities moving forward.

I am therefore appealing to you the participants and remind you of the value, and ask that you use these values like trust, like integrity, like professionalism, like cooperation, in the way you do business going forward. The success of this team is all about you. We are depending on you to replicate the training and incorporate it in the everyday functions of your organizations. You are now trained to go out there and make us proud.

Before I close, I would like to take a few moments to join Melanie in recognizing a few of the people and organizations that contributed to the combined effort and success that we have achieved here today. As she mentioned earlier, the United States Government, the United Kingdom Government, the Government of Canada, Australia, and the New Zealand Government, who were instrumental in sponsoring and continuing to sponsor, the efforts of UNLIREC throughout the region. I want to thank them.

I want to thank UNLIREC, and thank you, Melanie, for your leadership to facilitate the process of development of our national capacity. We do appreciate the capacity building that you and your organization are providing for us. And not only the capacity building, but also the mentorship, because I think it is necessary as we develop this young team to have that mentorship moving forward.

To the various agencies and their heads of departments that allowed them to be here, I want to say, thank you; to the comptroller of Customs, the CEO from Kolbe Foundation, the Chief Magistrate, for allowing their officers to form a part of this team. And I end by reiterating the team concept. I want for us not to go to our different units and operate in isolation, but for us to operate as a national team.

I want to also thank my very own, those in my own Ministry of National Security, Commissioner of Police, the Belize Coastguard, the Head of the National Forensic Science Service, Scenes of Crime, and last, but certainly not least, the Belize Defense Force.

To all those other people who assisted behind the scenes to make this a success, a sincere Thank You. I want to ask God’s continued blessings on us all as we move forward. Thank you.
I want to thank you for having participated in this training. We understand the level of commitment that is required for state agencies to dedicate five, six, seven representatives from each of the law enforcement agencies to participate in a ten-day course, particularly when we are dealing with institutions that are quite small, and they have limited resources; so we very much appreciate the commitment that you are showing to this, not just as participants, but as the institutional leaders that are driving this.

Our goal over the last two weeks was not only to impart knowledge on the various firearm activities and how to conduct investigations, or how to look at classification of weapons, or crime scene management, or weapon destruction and practical disarmament measures. These are all issues that are fundamental and are the reason behind the course. But I hope that what you will have gotten out of the last ten days is really an insight as to what your other colleagues are doing to combat illicit firearms trafficking.

The reason why we put so much emphasis on ensuring that the course is equally representative among all the law enforcement agencies and the Justice Sector is that we know that we’re only as strong as our weakest link, and therefore we need to understand the perspective of each and every agency working and responsible for combating illicit firearms trafficking. We need to have our Police Officers understand what is the perspective of our Customs Officers; and the Justice Sector, what is the information that they need to be able to carry out these cases.

And we saw this morning and yesterday in practical ways how it all comes together. But to have the opportunity to sit for days with your colleagues from all the other institutions, without rank or institutional badges on, is something that is very valuable; and I hope a lot was transferred during the interaction, and that you will all be able to go back to your important jobs and take into account the friendship and the contacts you have made with your colleagues. I think trust and respect, and understanding what the other side is going through and why they are going through is something that is very important, and it is just as important as all the technical skills that you can learn during specific training. So we hope that this is something that we were able to accomplish over the past few days.

I want to congratulate the national authorities for the steps that they taken over the past few months, and particularly this week. And I want to congratulate you and thank you for allowing us to share these past two weeks with you, and I hope that it has been worth it; and we are looking forward to coming back very soon. One of our teams will actually be here in Belize and Belmopan City in two weeks time, on the 18th of March, when we will be working with our colleagues from the Forensics Institute to undertake specialized training in forensics and ballistics management.

So we are delighted to know that several of you have already participated in this more general course, and that you will also be able to work with us more specifically and intimately on the issues of forensics and ballistics management.

Finally, I want to thank the donors that make the International assistance possible. The assistance that we are rendering to the Belizean authorities forms part of a general regional program that we have on firearms assistance in the Caribbean which is funded by a slew of donors, but led at this moment by the United States Government who has graciously offered the funding for the activities that have been taking place over the past two weeks. But we also receive funding from the United Kingdom, from the Canadian Government, from the Australian Government, and from the Government of New Zealand. So it very important for us to be able to thank them publicly and recognizing the support that they have given us, because they are the reason why we are able to come back.

In closing, let me congratulate you for the political and institutional commitment that you have demonstrated to this issue, and I thank you personally and individually, because you are the ones ultimately who are responsible for our day to day security. Citizen Security is not just an issue on paper, or an issue that we look at academically. It is something that we all live. So, thanks for protecting us; and thank you for all the ongoing work that you are doing in this area. Thank You.

Address by Melanie Regimbal

I want to congratulate you and thank you for allowing us to share these past two weeks with you, and I hope that it has been worth it; and we are looking forward to coming back very soon. One of our teams will actually be here in Belize and Belmopan City in two weeks time, on the 18th of March, when we will be working with our colleagues from the Forensics Institute to undertake specialized training in forensics and ballistics management.

So we are delighted to know that several of you have already participated in this more general course, and that you will also be able to work with us more specifically and intimately on the issues of forensics and ballistics management.

Finally, I want to thank the donors that make the International assistance possible. The assistance that we are rendering to the Belizean authorities forms part of a general regional program that we have on firearms assistance in the Caribbean which is funded by a slew of donors, but led at this moment by the United States Government who has graciously offered the funding for the activities that have been taking place over the past two weeks. But we also receive funding from the United Kingdom, from the Canadian Government, from the Australian Government, and from the Government of New Zealand. So it very important for us to be able to thank them publicly and recognizing the support that they have given us, because they are the reason why we are able to come back.

In closing, let me congratulate you for the political and institutional commitment that you have demonstrated to this issue, and I thank you personally and individually, because you are the ones ultimately who are responsible for our day to day security. Citizen Security is not just an issue on paper, or an issue that we look at academically. It is something that we all live. So, thanks for protecting us; and thank you for all the ongoing work that you are doing in this area. Thank You.

Address by Ebony Leal

I want to congratulate you and thank you for allowing us to share these past two weeks with you, and I hope that it has been worth it; and we are looking forward to coming back very soon. One of our teams will actually be here in Belize and Belmopan City in two weeks time, on the 18th of March, when we will be working with our colleagues from the Forensics Institute to undertake specialized training in forensics and ballistics management.

So we are delighted to know that several of you have already participated in this more general course, and that you will also be able to work with us more specifically and intimately on the issues of forensics and ballistics management.

Finally, I want to thank the donors that make the International assistance possible. The assistance that we are rendering to the Belizean authorities forms part of a general regional program that we have on firearms assistance in the Caribbean which is funded by a slew of donors, but led at this moment by the United States Government who has graciously offered the funding for the activities that have been taking place over the past two weeks. But we also receive funding from the United Kingdom, from the Canadian Government, from the Australian Government, and from the Government of New Zealand. So it very important for us to be able to thank them publicly and recognizing the support that they have given us, because they are the reason why we are able to come back.

In closing, let me congratulate you for the political and institutional commitment that you have demonstrated to this issue, and I thank you personally and individually, because you are the ones ultimately who are responsible for our day to day security. Citizen Security is not just an issue on paper, or an issue that we look at academically. It is something that we all live. So, thanks for protecting us; and thank you for all the ongoing work that you are doing in this area. Thank You.
Address by Ebony Leal

Continued from Page 19

management; and my favorite part of it was the disarmament measures that were taught to us, because I didn’t have any information on that prior to now, and it gave me good ideas of what we can and will be able to do now in our country as a team, as Mr. Lovell noted. The course culminated yesterday and today with an all day simulation of the groups formed, and it put each of the modules that we learnt and the skills that we developed together into one big simulation even to the point of having to present to the Court with real Magistrates of what we can and will be able to do now in our country as a team, as Mr. Lovell noted. The course culminated yesterday and today with an all day simulation of the groups formed, and it put each of the skills that we developed together into one big simulation even to the point of having to present to the Court with real Magistrates and real Defense Attorneys on it. And it proved to be very difficult, and it helped me to understand what each and every other member has to go through, what the Prosecutor has to go through, what the Police Officers go through, what the Intelligence Branch goes through. I, sitting in my office as a forensic analyst, would have assumed that I knew what everybody else goes through, but I didn’t. But now, after this course, I do have a good knowledge and appreciation of that. And each of us individuals have to reproduce these things in our daily jobs, and I hope that we will all do just that. A wealth of knowledge was gained; for some participants a great deal of it might have been a valuable refresher, and for others, it was new knowledge. Whichever the case, as one of our fa-
Training The Team TO Tackle The Trade Of Illegal Firearm, Ammunition and Explosives

UN Sponsored Course Graduates 44 Belizean Law-Enforcers

Continued from Page 20

Facilitators said to me in conversation, if only one individual gains any bit of new knowledge or information, or was reminded of something they had already known, then it can be said that the training was a success. I believe all of us individuals have key roles to play in combating the Illicit FAME trafficking. The purpose of having all of us present, I believe, was to create a relationship among participants in order that we gain knowledge from each other and interaction; and it was even fun.

So now I say to my fellow participants, the onus is on us to take what we have learnt back to our respective work places and put them into effect. Teach others and keep spreading information. We must be willing to initiate or assist in programs that we have learnt about, for example, when it comes to disarmament measures.

Let us now educate our government officials in these areas and help to effect a change. This way we will ensure that programs like these have an impact in our society, and not just taught and then lost.

On behalf of all of us the participants in the training course, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to UNLIREC and the Government of Belize; and especially to Mr. Julian Bustamante and his team. Thank you.

One key thing to note is the term inter-institutional. There were people from many departments here, and I believe all of us individuals have key roles to play in combating the Illicit FAME trafficking. The purpose of having all of us present, I believe, was to create a relationship among participants in order that we gain knowledge from each other and interaction; and it was even fun.

So now I say to my fellow participants, the onus is on us to take what we have learnt back to our respective work places and put them into effect. Teach others and keep spreading information. We must be willing to initiate or assist in programs that we have learnt about, for example, when it comes to disarmament measures.

Let us now educate our government officials in these areas and help to effect a change. This way we will ensure that programs like these have an impact in our society, and not just taught and then lost.

On behalf of all of us the participants in the training course, I would like to say a heartfelt thank you to UNLIREC and the Government of Belize; and especially to Mr. Julian Bustamante and his team. Thank you.
It was an early start to a long holiday weekend last Friday when the 15th paddling of the La Ruta Maya River Challenge got underway under the Hawksworth Bridge in the middle of the beautiful Twin-Town of San Ignacio/Santa Elena.

While every race is primarily, or ultimately, about winning (depending on whether you’re fast-forwarding or rewinding), La Ruta Maya is perhaps one of those sports that defies all the rules of the game. While everyone certainly would like to win, the paddling of the Ruta Maya and all the holiday activity (or lazy hangout) has, in itself, become such a thrilling (and relaxing) thing for those in the canoes and on the river-bank, it hardly matters at the end of the day (or any of the four days) who arrives first or who pulls up last.

But before we continue, lest we be accused of disrespecting the winners, let us acknowledge that it was the Belize Bank Bull Dogs who came in first, for the second year consecutively, thereby winning their 8th title since the event originated fifteen years ago in 1998.

We are speaking here, of course, only about the Elite Class; and there are so many other categories, including one that is most candidly dubbed the Pleasure Category, won this year by the Police, whose daytime (or nighttime) job is anything but pleasant.

Yes, Belize Bank won overall this year again, although this time they were not the first to cross the finish line at the Belcan Bridge in the Old Capital of Belize City. That distinction belongs to Zip Rider, who incidentally was also the first to establish a commanding lead at an important juncture (Iguana Creek Bridge), where we first saw the race (although they were later overtaken that same day by Belize Bank who finished first in the first leg ending at Banana Bank).

As it eventually turned out, Zip Rider, favored from the start, along with Belize Bank, to be one of the two rival teams with a clear shot at the 2013 Championship, did not even finish second overall, but third.

First place finish overall went instead to NICH, who were a significant factor from the start and came close to pulling off a victory in the fourth and final stage in Belize City, two days after pulling off an upset in the second stage, ending at Double Head Cabbage.

The fun, incidentally, (or, not so uneventfully) was amplified at the culmination of that second stage in Double Head Cabbage with a spill—sorry, it’s not cycling—a capsizing that featured, yes, the two giants of the classic, Belize Bank and Zip Rider, along with Cobbs Arms.

The Third Stage saw Zip Rider falling even further behind, and becoming less likely to win the event overall. We’re not going to get into all the hours and minutes and seconds here, as we are sure most of us could hardly care on a four-day weekend, what time exactly it was.

Which brings us back to the main point of our article, which is the fact of how a race, which, technologically, has everything to do with time, has become such a pass-time with so much social holiday activity (or uneventful laziness) built around it, that time literally freezes and rushes by all at the same time. And at the end of the day (or any of the four days) it hardly matters who finishes first or last. The truth is all Belizeans win, and all of Belize wins as so many people get to soak up so much of the natural beauty that is beheld by those in the race (or the cruise) and those watching.

And, for lack of space, that’s exactly where we will end, not at the finishing line, but with the breathtaking wealth untold all along the way, with which, as our National Anthem proclaims, Nature has blessed us. Thank you, La Ruta Maya, for leading us to el Camino a la Naturaleza Belicena.

A crowd on Iguana Creek Bridge applauds popular ‘Grumpy Old Men’

Zip-Rider in the lead approaching Iguana Creek Bridge

A sprint between two other canoes at Iguana Creek Bridge

Famous ‘Pandy Show’ host entertains while awaiting the race

Belize Bank in Second Place at Iguana Creek, eventually wins the race

Read Capital Weekly Online in Living Colours at: belizenews.com/CapitalWeekly
**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION**

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC; the Commission) serves notice this day, 15th March, 2013, that, in exercise of the powers conferred upon it by Section 15 of the Belize Telecommunications Act and Section 5 of the Telecommunications (Licensing Classification, Authorization, and Fee Structure) Regulations 2002, S.I. 110 of 2002, and all other powers thereunto enabling, it proposes to grant a Public Radio Paging License to the following applicant:

1. **VSR BELIZE LIMITED.**

A Public Radio Paging License is an Individual License that authorizes a Licensee to provide Radio Paging Service to the public for the provision of Vehicle Tracking Services in the country of Belize.

**Reason for proposed granting of Licenses:**

The Commission intends to grant License to the above applicant in order to introduce new services and technology and to further promote competition in the provision of telecommunication services.

**Comments/Objections:**

Interested persons may submit written representations or objections with respect to the proposed Licenses on or before 5th April, 2013, to the Public Utilities Commission, P.O. Box 300, #41Gabourel Lane, Belize City, Belize.

---

**Belmopan City Council**  
**Kids and Youth Cups 2013**  
(Organized by Belmopan Football League)  
Games Result week 2  
Youth Cup U-16  
Sunday 10/03/2013  
Manchester United (San Martin)=3  
Dmitri Fabro & Edu Vence (Roaring Creek)=03  
Manchester United (San Martin)=10 & 33 min  
Eddy Valencia (Maya Mopan)=28 min  
Barcelona (Site 7)=06 vs Chelsea (Maya Mopan)=00  
Alex Brooks=20 min  
Dale Pelayo=66 min  
Noah Moreno=57 min  
Tyrek Middleton=62 min  
Brandon Anderson=77 min

**Celtic (Las Flores)=02 vs Real Madrid (Mountain View)=00**  
**Jairo Lopez=51 min**  
**Ronald Orellana=55 min**

**Games Schedule Week 3**  
**Kids Cup U-12**  
Saturday 16/03/2013  
1:00 pm Celtic (Las Flores) vs Manchester United (San Martin)  
2:30 pm Valencia YWAM (Roaring Creek) vs Manchester City (Armenia)

**Kids Cup U-12**  
Sunday 17/03/2013  
1:00 pm Inter Milan (Piccini) vs Manchester United (San Martin)  
2:30 pm Barcelona (Site 7) vs AC Milan (Salvapan) 1

**Information provided by Peter Alvarez, Chairman**

**Dmitri Fabro & Eddy Valencia of Valencia YWAM Roaring Creek (1)**  
**Ronald Orellana & Jairo Lopez of Celtic Las Flores**

---

**Belmopan Kids and Youth Cup 2013**

---

**Alex Brooks, Noah Moreno, Brandon Anderson, Tyrek Middleton and Dale Pelayo of Barcelona Site 7**
First historic National Communication System installed

For the first time, the Ministry of Health has established a National Communications System to network with the Public Health providers across the country. Enhanced communications have already been established between Northern Regional Hospital, Southern Regional Hospital and Central Health Region since its installation last month. This system will support real-time reporting and communication from incident site directly to the Emergency Operating Center (EOC) at the headquarters in Belmopan. It will also be useful during possible electricity downtime during disasters or emergencies.

Works will commence shortly to include connecting San Pedro Town and Western Regional Hospital in Belmopan. Regional Managers of the respective EOCs will be responsible to manage and maintain the equipment. The system was procured through technical cooperation with PAHO at a total cost of BZ$28,000.

Third Cohort of Field Epidemiology Training Program commences

The Ministry of Health has commenced on the third cohort in a basic level course in Field Epidemiology Training Program (FETTP) for participants including Public Health Inspectors, Laboratory Technicians and Medical officers of the Ministry and from the Belize Defence Force.

Objectives of the program include building capacity for front line responders in the detection, surveillance, response, analysis and prevention associated with high priority public health problems. Presentation topics include Modeling and Measuring Diseases, Presenting Epidemiology data and Outbreak and Investigation Steps among others.

Coordinator for the FETTP Module, Englebert Emmanuel anticipates that the training will further strengthen the technical leadership of all the participants who work directly with surveillance and investigation of diseases in Belize.

Twenty professionals have since graduated from the first and second Basic Module Training and four from the Advance Module since 2009.

World Cancer Day 2013

A Cancer Symposium was held at the Bliss Center in observation of World Cancer Day celebrated globally February 4th. It was a night of facts, statistics and survivor’s stories.

In the Caribbean, Central and South America, cancer remains as the second leading cause of death. Dr. Francis Morey, National Tuberculosis Coordinator, at the Ministry was among the presenters featured that night at the symposium.

He mentioned that in Belize more than 10% of annual deaths are related to cancer. During the 5 year period, 2007-2011, there were a total of 857 cancer deaths and almost half of these occurred in persons less than 65 years of age.

While 80 percent of cancers are attributable to environmental, dietary, social and cultural risk factors, the Ministry is taking a leading role with the support of other organizations in the promotion of health and prevention of all types of cancers. Research shows that a third of most cancers can be prevented and that is why the Ministry is also working on greater collaboration in data collection to direct and develop guidelines, norms and policies.

World Cancer Day was celebrated under the theme, “Cancer, Did you know? Get the Facts!”

Nutrition Unit conducts training to improve Dietary Services at Hospitals

In an effort to improve on Dietary Services within the regional and district hospitals across the country, the Nutrition Unit of the Ministry hosted a Dietary training session at Southern Regional Hospital Kitchen with cooks, dietary aides and dietary supervisors to improve on the quality of food preparation in hospitals.

During a short theory session, participants were educated on specialized diets and the importance of nutrition care and the quality of foods served at patients. A practical session was conducted in the preparation of nine commonly used recipes. These recipes included Corn, Oatmeal, Squash and Rice Porridges, whole wheat Johnny cakes and tortillas, soy milk and preparing herbal seasonings mixture.

The session also allowed staff to address weaknesses in the dietary unit of their respective hospitals. Nutritionist Robyn Daly encouraged the staff to commit to a more nutritious menu including a daily diet of more fruits and vegetables, and preparing foods low in fat, sugar and salt. A commitment was also made on behalf of the Ministry to assist the kitchens to becoming more equipped with the necessary utensils and training as a means to enhance food quality.

Ministry of Health
Belmopan
822-2325/2363