

STAR

"The Newspaper That Cares And Dares To Bring Out The Truth"



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Price \$1.00

SHOTS FIRED AT THE MINISTER'S RESIDENCE

SAN IGNACIO TOWN, Cayo, Saturday, March 8, 2008:

It was shortly after 8:30 pm on Saturday, 8 March, when the sound of the firing of several gunshots broke the silence of the night in the neighborhood of the Roman Catholic Church and monastery on Church Street in San Ignacio Town.

Police rushed to the scene where they instantly noted that the shots were fired at the residence of **Agriculture & Fisheries Minister, Hon. Rene Montero.**

Preliminary investigation revealed that the shots were fired by a lone gunman who stood across the street in the dark area of the monastery.

One eyewitness reported seeing "fire" coming from the area as the



Police reports no personal injuries and minor damages to the building

shots were fired. In the process of their investigation San Ignacio Police recovered nine expended 9mm casings from the scene.

An inspection of the building revealed several holes in the upper

and lower front sections of the cement structure suspected to have been caused by the impact of the bullets.

Fortunately, no one was injured as the family was not at home when the incident occurred. Being active

supporters of the Annual La Ruta Maya River Challenge, Minister Montero and his family were on the trail with their Agro Tech Team.

Police informed that the incident was immediately brought to the minister's attention and a police guard post was immediately established at the residence. Police say that the 24-hour police presence will remain active until an appropriate time.

While most of the shots rebounded off the cement wall on the facade of the building, one shot in particular broke a single louver blade of a front window. The single shot went through a cloth curtain hanging on the front window. The slug was later retrieved from inside a wall in the bathroom.

In the process of the investigation, several persons were detained, questioned and released.

Police reports no major damage to the residence as the intense investigation continues.

Baptist Priest Charged For Grievous Harm

BELMOPAN CITY, Cayo, Tuesday, March 11, 2008:

A Baptist priest from the village of Roaring Creek today appeared in Belmopan Magistrate Court charged for grievous harm.

Pastor Ralph Digman, 62, was today presented before Belmopan Magistrate, **Earl Jones** where he pleaded not guilty to causing grievous harm to **Errol "Rupert" Smith**, 22, Belizean University of Belize student, residing on Swasey Street in Belmopan. Pastor Digman pleaded not guilty to the charge. He was offered and met bail in the sum of two thousand dollars and ordered to reappear in court on Tuesday, April 29, 2008.

At the center of the controversy is the 22 year old Belizean adopted daughter of the pastor. She was legally adopted by the Digmans since the age of 13. Along with Smith, the



The Accused, Pastor Ralph Digman, 62

young lady is also a student at the Belmopan Campus of the University of Belize. While it has also been established that Smith and the young lady have been acquaintances for at least the past seven years, the level of their relationship is different dependent on who is speaking. While Pastor Digman claims the relationship to be on the basis of friendship and

not intimacy. Digman says that the problems started when his daughter told Smith that "*she could not continue the relationship because he was not a Christian*".

In terms of the relationship, Smith differs in his claim. He said that the young lady has spent several weeks on end with him on his father's Sibun River farm on the Hummingbird Highway. We were unable to speak to the young lady because the father told us that she was at school and that she would have a late class but when we went to the late class she was not in attendance.

HOW AND WHY DID THE INCIDENT TAKE PLACE?

Smith contends that he was advised by the young lady's teacher that she had been missing a number of sessions including a quiz and if she did not attend the next session she would be missing a test. When her cellular



The Complainant

Errol "Rupert" Smith, 22

telephone went unanswered, he called the house phone and when Pastor Ralph came on the line, he told him not to call the house.

About 10 minutes later Smith received a call from the young lady

Turn To Page 2

GRAND OPENING

Easter Weekend!!

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Two More Male Persons Reported Missing

POLICE PRESS OFFICE, Belize City, Thursday, March 13, 2008:

Like in cases of sexual crimes, there somehow appears to be an increase in reports of missing person.

The challenge in following up these cases is that in the majority of instances, after the initial report has been made and the information has been passed on to the media, there is hardly any follow-up in those cases when these missing person are

reunited with their families.

Today there is an additional two persons reported to have gone missing.

In the first case, **Brenda Augustine**, 35, of #87 New Road in Belize City reported that between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., on Sunday, March 9, her 15 year old son, **Roberto Roaches**, left home for places unknown riding a brown male beach cruiser bicycle. He has neither

returned home, nor heard from since. Roberto is of creole decent, dark complexion, slim built, about 5 feet 6 inches in height, weighs about 100 lbs. He also bears a tattoo with letters “RR” on his left arm. He was last seen wearing a black long sleeve jacket, white button up shirt, long blue jeans pants, red, white and blue baseball cap and a camouflage slippers.

Anyone knowing the whereabouts of Roberto Roaches is asked to call the nearest police station or 0800-922-TIPS.

In the second reported incident **Lily Mejia**, 35, of #6 Guyana Street, San Martin Area Belmopan, reported to Belmopan police that at about 1:00 p.m., on Wednesday, March 12, her common-law husband **Elbin Herrera** left home en route to his ex-wife’s residence also located in the same San Martin Area of the Capital City and has since not returned.

Elbin is of hispanic decent with brown eyes, straight black hair and of brown complexion. He has a scar on the left side of his face, he stands 5 feet 8 inches in height. He was last seen wearing a long blue jeans pants with T-shirt. Police are investigating.

Baptist Priest Charged For Grievous Harm

From Front Page

who told him that she had missed the call because she had gone to the shop. He began to ask her about missing classes and she said that she was sick. He was just about to tell her about the upcoming test when she abruptly terminated the conversation telling him that she had to go. Realizing that he needed to tell her about the test, he called the house phone for a second time and when the pastor insisted that he would not speak to the young lady, Smith reportedly told him that the message was important and that if he is not allowed to communicate with her over the telephone, “*I will pay her a personal visit. He told me to come*” said Smith “*because he had something for me.*”

He left the painting task he was doing with some relatives, rushed over to his nearby house, changed his clothes and jumped on his bicycle for the 2 mile ride from Belmopan to Roaring Creek. “*When I arrived, there was a male and female person standing on the road almost in front of pastor’s house. I stood outside the gate and called out the young lady’s name two times and said good night two times*” said Smith. “*I saw Mr. Ralph descending the steps with an aluminum baseball bat in his right hand. I lifted both arms in the air and I said to him - Mr. Ralph why are you approaching me with a weapon. I come in peace. He told me that I cannot see the young lady and that he told me not to come. Just then the man who was standing on the street said something to the effect that I should leave and when I was in the process of turning around to better hear the man, I felt a massive blow to the back of my head. I fell to the ground outside the fence and the next thing I knew was that the police was holding my hand. They loaded me and my bicycle into the police vehicle and took me to the Belmopan hospital. I was treated and the police took me to the station to give a report. Mr. Ralph was already at the police station filing a report. I told the police that I was not feeling good and that I wanted to go back to the hospital. They told me that if they took me back to the hospital that*

I would have to find my way home. I instead requested to be taken home where my relatives could take me to the hospital. I remained in the hospital and on the following morning I was taken to Universal Health Services for a CAT scan and X-rays. I returned to the hospital where I remained for the next three days. I was discharged on Thursday, March 7”.

For his part Pastor Ralph informed that shortly after 7:00 pm on Tuesday, March 4 he received a call from Smith informing that he wanted to speak to his daughter. “*I told him not to call because she did not want to speak to him. He told me that if I did not allow him to speak to her that he was coming to the house I told him not to come and he insisted that he was coming. I called the police and told them to send someone. They told me that they cannot do that. I called my neighbor and he said that he was having supper and that he could not come but that he would keep an eye out for me. I had barely finished speaking to the neighbor when he rode up on a bicycle. He opened the gate and with both hands in his pockets he was walking up to my house. I came out with the bat and he was coming straight at me. I truly feared that he might shoot or cut me. I raised the bat and gave him a single blow to the head. He stumbled and ran out the gate. He wanted to come back in but a relative of the neighbor who was standing on the road in front of the house stopped him. I heard him saying something about bulleting me. I feel terribly for what happened but I am praying for that boy. In hindsight, if I had to do it over again, I would have just gathered the girl and the little baby that we are caring for and jumped in the van and left even before he had arrived. I will be taking some time off and will leave the area for a while because this is too much for me. My wife is undergoing medical treatment in the States. She has been gone since October of last year”*, concluded Pastor Digman.

While, in the absence of the no-nonsense Officer Commanding



The scene of the incident - Pastor Ralph residence

that police sub-formation, **Supt. Rudolph Orio**, Belmopan police were extremely uncooperative in our request for information, one interesting aspect of this case is that a full 8 days after the incident, the accused was still in possession of the

aluminum bat used in the incident. One would have thought that in gathering evidence to levy charges, the very first thing that the police would want to lay their hands on is the instrument used to commit the crime. Not so in this case. Why?

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Editorial



Said Musa Must Now Resign As The Member For Fort George

It has long been established that a strong opposition is vital for a strong democracy. A strong opposition serves to keep the government in check and is the watchdog that keeps constant vigil over a government in a healthy democracy.

As the situation now stands, Belize has the weakest opposition ever in its post independence history as there is a fierce opposition among the few elected members of the opposition Peoples' United Party.

Humpty Dumpty sat upon a wall for 10 long years. On February 7, 2008 Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. It will take a long time, if ever, for all the King's horses and all the kings men to ever put Humpty Dumpty together again.

The more blatant instances of underhandedness on the part of **Said Musa** are only now coming to light. The people rose up in massive protests against any public funds going into paying the private debt of Universal Health Services. Those massive protests forced Said Musa to make a public commitment to the effect that no public funds would be going into settling that debt.

The defeated Musa Government requested and received a twenty million dollar grant from the Republic of China on Taiwan. The grant was specifically provided for use in the health care sector. The people were strongly opposed to public funds going into paying the private debt of Universal Health Services. Therefore, the logical option would have been for the Taiwanese grant to be invested in upgrading the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital as the people have been demanding. Not so!!! Contrary to the wishes of the

people, Said Musa, in October 2007, instead secretly diverted every single penny of the 20 million dollar Taiwanese grant to Universal Health Services. This information is only now coming to light.

Furthermore, another 20 million dollars grant from the Republic of Venezuela, specifically earmarked for the construction of new houses for deserving Belizeans, was similarly secretly diverted into paying the private debt of Universal Health Services.

Had the people known of these two secret transactions prior to the February 7, 2008 general elections, there is a strong possibility that the Peoples' United Party would not have gotten a single seat in the current

House of Representatives.

Despite the crafty concealment of these two major breaches of the peoples' trust, the nation come out, on February 7, and administered the severest political lashing that the Peoples' United Party has ever experience in its almost 58 years of existence.

Amidst these major breaches of the peoples' trust, one must now seriously wonder: How on earth will Said Musa ever justifiably sit on the opposition side of the House of Representatives alongside **Mark Espat** and **Johnny Briceño**, both of whom have publicly directed some very harsh statements at him? How is it that Said Musa will ever be able to sit in the House of Representatives and be taken seriously on any matter that will be debated therein?

The nation in general was

deceived by Said Musa. He evidently deceived his cabinet but more specifically, he deceived the people of the Fort George Division. Said Musa's political character has been fatally wounded. Before the noose tightens any further around his neck, Said Musa might want to seriously consider publicly apologizing to the nation of Belize and beg the people of the Fort George Division for forgiveness and in addition to already resigning as leader of the Peoples' United Party, Said Musa should now proceed to resign as the member for Fort George thereby affording the people of that constituency the opportunity to elect a new leader, one who can morally, proudly and without fear, stand inside the House of Representatives and truly represent the people in a meaningful and credible way.

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Tourism Industry Donates New Computer To Police

SAN IGNACIO TOWN, Cayo, Thursday, March 6, 2008:

In their on-going efforts to assist the Belize Police Department in their fight against crime, the Cayo Chapter of the Belize Tourism Industry Association (B.T.I.A.) has donated a new computer system to the San Ignacio Police station.

On hand to receive the generous donation were **Sr. Superintendent of Police, David Henderson** and **Sgt. Mark Flowers**.

The computer system was presented on behalf of B.T.I.A. (Belize Tourism Industry Association) by **Julian Sherrard**, tourism industry representative to the National Crime Council and B.T.I.A. security consultant, **Mike Green**.

Sr. Supt. Henderson expressed his sincere appreciation to the tourism industry for their generous donation of the much needed computer equipment. He stated that the computer will be assigned to the Duties and Discipline Office at the station and will assist tremendously with streamlining daily operations and record keeping.

Mike Green commented that, *"With tourism being a leading industry in Belize and a major financial contributor to our economy, and crime being a*



(L-R) Sr. Supt. David Henderson, Sgt. Mark Flowers, Julian Sherrard and Mike Green.

negative factor that directly affects not only our tourism visitors, but all people of Belize, it is imperative that we all make a determined and sustained effort to support our law enforcement agencies."

This latest donation from the B.T.I.A.'s crime prevention program follows last year's donation and construction of a one-way glass

identification booths at both the San Ignacio and Benque Viejo Police Stations, the establishment of a Rewards Fund to assist with the apprehension of individuals involved in crimes against tourists, and the donation of temporary rental vehicles and fuel on several occasions to support the Police Department and the Belize Defense Force in their preventive patrol efforts.

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- ◆ A working knowledge of Microsoft Word and Excel
- ◆ Conversant with use of email and internet
- ◆ Proficient in English. Knowledge of Spanish would be an asset.

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- ◆ Greeting and hosting hotel guests
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- ◆ A working knowledge of Microsoft Word and Excel
- ◆ Conversant with use of email and internet
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Applications should reach this office no later than April 4, 2008.

ATTENTION!!!

The Annual San Ignacio/Santa Elena Municipal Easter Fair will be held on Holy Saturday & Easter Sunday, March 22nd & 23rd at the Macal Park in San Ignacio Town, Cayo.



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Letters to the Editor

With Time The Discomfort Will Disappear

Dear Editor;

I would truly appreciate a small section of your newspaper to address the closing of as section of Pineapple Street in Santa Elena, Cayo.

When the new area was first developed in Santa Elena, Mario Castellanos, approached my dad, William Butcher, to obtain an access road through, the private property of Catalina Butcher.

Castellanos promised compensation in the form of a house lot. For those that know this area, the value of the land we were giving up is much greater than the house lot but given the fact that there was no access to the new area, as good citizens we agreed for our private land to be used as a roadway.

For the past 4 years, while our land was being used as a roadway indicating our compliance with our side of the agreement, we tried to work with Mario Castellanos to get him to hold up to his end of the agreement, but the promised house lot never came to reality. Then just two weeks before the February 7 general elections, Castellanos told us that he had put in another access road and that our land was no longer needed to serve as the access road to the new development. Having been so advised, we took back our private

land and we proceeded with our planned development and investment in the area.

Understanding that changes normally produce reaction, those who are accustomed to using our private land as a roadway are understandably reacting to the change, with time they will get used to the new arrangement and the current discomfort will be regularized.

It is only fitting however what we inform the public in general and those affected by the change in particular that the land in question was purchased over 15 years ago by Mrs. Catalina Butcher from Mr. Emelio Castillo.

The temporary road therefore was never the property of the government of Belize. I could have become a permanent arrangement however, if only Mario Castellanos had lived up to his side of the agreed compensation.

The new access road, which now bear the load of traffic in the area, is in dire need of attention, I am therefore appealing to our new Area Representative, Hon. Rene Montero, to send a crew out there to address the situation with a sense of urgency.

Cordially,

Shalue Butcher

Santa Elena, Cayo

I Would Like To Donate Some Money

Dear Editor;

My name is Mayolita Amason (Requena). I wanted to say thank you so much for publishing that nice article about my brother reuniting with our mother in Belize.

It was a very nicely written, interesting, and different from most of what we see these days. Usually "the news" we read is about crime in some way, shape or form.

I noticed someone else also complemented you on the article and you should be proud to have played a part in bringing together a family. You could have decided not to help me. You could have decided not to take the time to do what you did but as you can see there are more than just me and my brother who were positively affected by the whole process.

A pebble is dropped into a river produces ripples and these ripples go

on and on...By the way my brother greatly enjoyed his two week trip to Belize this last month.

I was quite upset to hear about the Scout group who's project was so badly disrespected. I don't know if that was a Girl Scout or Boy Scout troop you were referring to in that article? Anyway, I am an assistant den leader in my son's boy scout troop here in the states and I know if that had happened to us I would be devastated. My point is...I would like to donate some money to their cause. Either for bringing back some of the plants or for some of their projects in the future.

I always say charity begins at home and Belize will always be my first home. If there is someone I can contact about it just let me know because I would really like to give something back.

Thank you. Mayolita Amason

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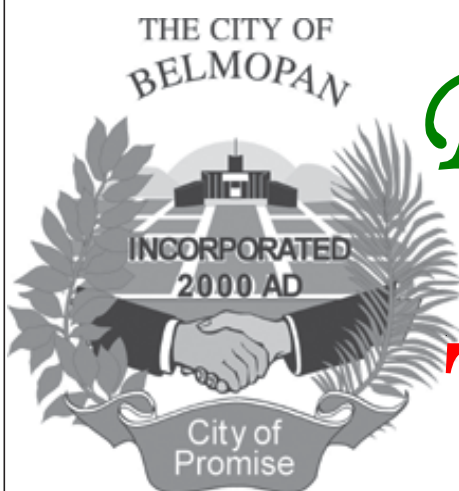
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Belmopan City Council

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- **5% Discount for full payment of 2007/08 Property Fees made ON or before March 31, 2008.**

N.B. Senior Citizens (65 yrs or older) are eligible for an additional 5% discount for properties on which they reside.

**Wishing Everyone a Happy, Safe & Blessed Easter Holiday
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Dated 14th January, 2008.
City Administrator

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Celebration Time

Mr. and Mrs. Jones were sitting at a table inside Eva's Restaurant on Burns Avenue when Mrs. Jones looks over at a nearby table and sees a man in a drunken stupor.

Mr. Jones asks "I notice you've been watching that man for some time now. Do you know him?"

"Yes" replies Mr. Jones. "He's my ex-husband and has been drinking like that since I left him seven years ago."

"That's remarkable" replies Mr. Jones, "I never thought that anybody could celebrate that long."

Learning To Speak

A man walks into doctor Smith's office and puts a note on the table for the doctor to read.

It said, "I can't talk! Help me!"

Dr. Smith nodded, and motions for the man to put his hands on the table.

The man thinks to himself that his hands has nothing to do with his inability to talk, but he does as the

doctor ordered.

Dr. Smith quickly picked up a big book and slams it on the man's hands as hard as he could.

"AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!!!" the man yelled.

"Very good, very good," said Dr. Smith. "Come back tomorrow and we'll work on the 'B'."

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A Fisherman Outsmarts The Officer

Mr. Badillo was walking up the pier in San Pedro Town carrying two large live lobsters one in each hand.

It was three weeks after the season closed! Whom should he meet at the end of the pier but a team of Officer from the Fisheries Department. Upon viewing the live and wiggling lobsters, the most senior officer says: "Well, look what we have here. A man with two live lobsters, three weeks after the close of the season."

In response Mr. Badillo says, "No, Mr. Officer, you are wrong! These are two trained lobsters that I caught two weeks before the season ended."

"Trained lobsters?" asked the officer, "what the hell do you mean by trained lobsters?"

"Well officer" says Mr. Badillo, "each day I take these two from my house and I bring them down to the pier. I put them in the

water for a swim. While they swim, I sit on the pier and I smoke a cigarette or two. After about 15 minutes I whistles and up comes my two lobsters, and I take them home!"

"Really!?", exclaimed the Fisheries Officer "I will have to see that one to believe it."

So, Mr. Badillo goes ahead of the Fisheries Officer to the end of the pier where, under supervision, he gently lowers both lobsters into the water.

He sits on the pier and lights up a cigarette, then another! After about 15 minutes the Fisheries Officer says to him, "How about whistling for them now?"

"Whistle for what?" asked Mr. Badillo.

"For the two lobsters of course" responded the officer.

"What Lobsters?" asked Mr. Badillo.

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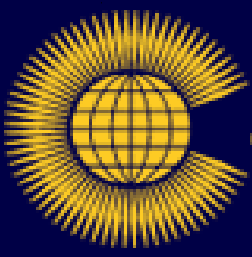
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Excerpts From The COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT General Election Observer Team Report

POLITICAL BACKGROUND

In the course of their second term, the Government has been plagued by accusations of corruption and fiscal mismanagement and came under increasing pressure in the face of large budget deficits, and a dramatically increasing national debt.

Civil unrest broke out in the capital city of Belmopan during mid-January 2005 and continued sporadically for several months. The initial unrest was provoked by the release of a national budget with significant tax increases.

At the municipal Election held in March 2006, the PUP lost heavily winning only three of the available 67 seats. The UDP won the remaining 64 despite two other parties and four independent candidates having contested.

Shortly before the 2008 Election the Government announced that, in addition to the General Election ballot, Belizeans would be given the opportunity to vote in a referendum on whether the Senate should become an elected body. The introduction of the referendum was opposed by the UDP who were vocal in urging their

supporters to ignore the referendum ballot entirely on polling day. The addition of the referendum also added a new dimension to previously well-established and understood voting procedures which many felt would be problematic.

For example, the UDP, while having called for an elected Senate, felt that the proposal needed further discussion as to the form and content.

THE ISSUES

The UDP was unapologetic in including in their issues those of corruption, land distribution, cronyism and the general need for change. Every message in the media and several speeches at the campaign rallies focused upon those issues and gave specifics concerning the charges of rampant cronyism and corruption and identified the areas and persons involved in the alleged tainted land deals.

The PUP on the other hand sought to blunt the power of their opponents' message and concentrated on their performance as government and their vision for the future.

Other issues and allegations which

arose during the campaign included accusations of hurried large-scale granting of citizenship to Guatemalans; the granting of loans and land titles in return for loyalty to the PUP at the polls; the registration of voters in districts in which they did not reside; and the outright buying of votes with payment to be made upon proof of how people cast their ballots.

This last was exacerbated by a heated debate over the possible use of cell phone cameras in polling booths to record how a vote was cast. The Election and Boundaries Commission, we were told, had agreed unanimously to ban cell phones in polling stations in order to allay these fears but a disagreement then ensued between Commissioners and parties as to the administrative and/or legislative requirements to implement such a ban. Uncertainty on whether the ban would or would not be imposed continued until the day before elections when the Prime Minister signed a statutory instrument allowing cell phones into polling stations but barring the taking of photos with them.

While the messages were tough

and often vituperative, the campaign and election as a whole were conducted with surprising good humour. Catchy campaign songs for and against both major parties and even individual candidates dominated the airwaves.

While supporters of all parties were passionate, vocal and adorned in their party colours and slogans, there were few incidents of violence though there were some unconfirmed allegations of intimidation.

THE INDEPENDENCE OF AN ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODY

The Independence of an Election Management Body

This complex structure of having two bodies, one of which reports directly into the Prime Minister's office seriously compromises the perception of independence for any election management body.

The team observed that whilst there was confidence in the Elections and Boundaries Department in relation to the huge logistical exercise of an election there was some suspicion over the oversight role of the Office of Good Governance.

The present situation is that the Director of the Office of Good Governance is the former Chief Elections Officer and, since the

Please Turn To Page 11



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Excerpts From The COMMONWEALTH SECRETARIAT General Election Observer Team Report

current Acting Chief Elections Officer has only been in the position since October 2007, the Director was playing a hands-on role coordinating and advising on Elections.

As the Director of the Office of Good Governance reports directly to the Prime Minister, this unofficial "advisory" role to the Elections and Boundaries Department was met with much dissatisfaction by the opposition parties and some members of civil society.

Indeed, the team observed that during our meeting with the Chief Elections Officer and other senior members of her team, the Director of the Office of Good Governance was not only present but actively chaired the meeting.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Having observed the 2008 General Election, the Team has observed that Belize enjoys a mature democracy and a well-functioning electoral process. While the inclusion of a ballot for the referendum at short notice caused some confusion and added to the length of the process, the voting and counting were carried out efficiently and the Team is of the view that the 2008 General Election were credible.

We are aware that up to the time of writing this report we have heard no complaint that the conduct of the election affected the results.

The following recommendations seek to identify areas and make suggestions on improvements which can be made to the electoral structure, process and environment in Belize.

- To work towards a single independent election management body which reports directly to Parliament and is autonomous from any government department.
- Thought should be given to expanding the Election and Boundaries Commission to include independent members with the Chairman appointed from this group.
- The Chief Elections Officer should report directly to the Commission and be responsible to them for the day to day conduct of elections.
- A reconstituted Elections and Boundaries Commission should continue to have the authority to request names of Public Service employees from Government Ministries to act as election officers.
- It is recommended that enabling mechanisms should be used to overcome the barriers to women's participation, change perceptions and increase women's participation as candidates. A number of models to

achieve this can be found in Commonwealth countries.

· It is recommended that for transparency of the electoral process, disclosure of funding and

expenditure on campaigns should be filed with the relevant Election Management Body and made publicly available.

It would be useful for the Presiding Officer to be provided with a master voters list for each division. This would speed up any queries that may occur in relation to where a voter should cast his vote.

· We would encourage the

Secretary-General of the Commonwealth to respond positively to any relevant requests for technical assistance in relation to these recommendations.

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*We aslo take this opportunity to thank
Members of the Bismillah Staff, especailly
Evelyn, Ruby, Bicri, Zulma, Amilcar, Naim, Mauro & Puyush.
We thank you all for your never ending support,
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