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Chinese businesses in Belize close in protest over murders

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BELIZE CITY, Belize -- The Chinese community in Belize closed all their businesses in the country on Monday in protest over the brutal murder of two of its members. They also demonstrated in Belize City on Monday morning; and because of four slayings over the weekend, Prime Minister Dean Barrow summoned a meeting of the attorney general, minister responsible for police, minister national security, commissioner of police, head of the army and coast guard.

The Chinese own more than 95 percent of the grocery stores in the county and, as a result, more than 300 grocery stores in Belize City, Belmopan, Orange Walk, Corozal, Dangriga, Punta Gorda, San Ignacio and other areas were closed, and some of them plan to close their doors on Tuesday as well.

The prime minister at a news conference expressed concern at the escalation of crime and pledged to set up machinery at least to minimise if not curb violent crime in the Central American country.

Barrow said that he is looking at introducing stringent laws in this regard, to have more police patrols and to improve police intelligence.

Commissioner of Police Crispin Jeffries said that for the year so far there have been 33 murders, with 21 in Belize City alone.

The Chinese community is asking that the death penalty be carried out for capital offences.

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