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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan. 18th August 2021. 6:00 p.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 17th August 2021.

- Cabinet was apprised by the Ministry of Health & Wellness on the current situation at the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital and the national response to the third wave of COVID-19. So far this year the virus has claimed 63 lives, six in the past week alone and is putting a strain on the health system. In response to the request from the Ministry of Health & Wellness, Cabinet has agreed to additional COVID-19 measures that will be released by the Ministry of Health & Wellness. Cabinet urges all Belizeans who have not yet been vaccinated to get vaccinated. Vaccinations save lives.
- Cabinet was updated on the status of vaccines and the number of vaccines available in Belize. As of 16th August 2021, 149,428 or 34.7 percent of the population had received at least one dose of the vaccine. This represents an increase of 7,658 new vaccinations over last week's numbers. As of 16th August 2021, 61,567 or 14.3 percent of the population has been fully vaccinated, an increase of 5,237 more Belizeans have been fully vaccinated over last week's 56,330.
- On 18th August 2021, 111,000 Pfizer vaccines arrived in Belize to be followed by 112,000 Johnson & Johnson vaccines on 21st August 2021. This first allotment of the Pfizer vaccines will be used primarily to vaccinate the 58,000 Belizean youth between the ages of 12 to 17 years old.
- The Minister of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labor & Local Government informed Cabinet that negotiations between the Christian Workers Union and the Port of Belize over the collective bargaining agreement between the staff of the Port of Belize were progressing steadily

towards a successful outcome and that the matter involving the stevedores was now before the Labour Tribunal.

- Cabinet gave its approval to make the necessary amendments to the current Trade License Regime to complete the Trade License Reform and prepare the necessary legislative amendments.
- Cabinet endorsed the enactment of Medical Waste Regulations to tackle the long-standing human, health and environmental challenge concerning the disposal of medical waste to be implemented and enforced by the Department of the Environment.
- Cabinet endorsed the timeline of activities set out by the Statistical Institute of Belize to prepare for the conduct of the May 2022 Population and Housing Census and to provide the necessary funding to conduct the census.
- Recognizing that the citrus industry is critical to Belize's socioeconomic development, Cabinet approved the allocation of \$15 million in loan financing disbursed through the DFC for the industry. This financing facility will be disbursed over a three-year period at interest rates ranging from 5.5 to 8 percent for implementing short- and medium-term programs necessary for the revitalization of the citrus industry.
- Cabinet approved the lifting of the ban on visas for nationals of India and Bangladesh and requested that the Attorney General draft the appropriate statutory instrument.
- Finally, Cabinet is asking all Belizeans to remain alert, especially those in the northern districts as Hurricane Grace draws closer to the Yucatan Peninsula. Information from the National Meteorological Service of Belize indicates that at 3:00 p.m. today, Hurricane Grace was 317 miles east northeast of Corozal Town or 330 miles northeast of Belize City. Hurricane Grace is expected to make landfall somewhere between Playa del Carmen and Tulum, Mexico early morning on 19th August and will impact Belize with squally showers and thunderstorms and rains of one to four inches, which will come mostly behind the system.

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