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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan. 13th January 2022. 10:50 a.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 11th January 2022.

- Cabinet welcomed the news from the Prime Minister that Belize was one of only two countries chosen by the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) an independent United States Government foreign aid agency to give support to micro, small, and medium enterprises in its effort to reduce poverty through growth. The compact and threshold programs, which will be signed between the Government of Belize and MCC could result in Belize gaining between US\$200 and US\$500 million in grant funding to aid in the nation's economic development.

Belize was chosen by the MCC Board having been satisfied that the current administration is committed to ruling justly, investing in the development of its people and its economic policy. The MCC-funded projects are expected to commence in 2023 and last for a period of five years. MCC awards countries based on the principle that aid is most effective when it is reinforced by good governance.

- Cabinet received the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the sale of government assets and took note of the findings of the commission, condemning in the strongest possible terms the detailed reports of mismanagement, waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption, which have come to so clearly define the United Democratic Party Government from 2008 to 2020. In addition, Cabinet instructed that the report be submitted to the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions for any advice and action deemed appropriate and necessary.
- Cabinet was updated on the status of vaccinations and the number of vaccines available in Belize. Currently, there are more than 346,000 vaccines on hand. As of 10th January 2022, 211,628 persons or 49.2 percent of the total population had received at least one dose of the vaccine and 200,994 or 46.7 percent of the total population have been fully vaccinated. Additionally, over 21,000 booster shots have been issued since the start of the Booster Program, which is now opened to everyone who has been fully vaccinated for three months or more. Also, 23,817 Belizeans aged 12 to 17 years old have received at least one dose of the vaccine.

- The Minister of Health and Wellness also informed Cabinet that new vaccination sites will be set up in communities in the north, west and south of the country to provide better access to vaccines in rural communities.
- The Minister of Education, Culture, Science & Technology informed Cabinet that of the 605 schools countrywide, 570 were granted approval for some form of face-to-face instruction. Of these approved schools, 198 were opened for face-to-face instruction on 10th January with the remaining approved schools to be opened for in-class instruction by the end of January 2022.
- Cabinet approved amendments to Section 33 (1) b, c, and d of the Plastics Regulations and for effective dates of implementation of the Environmental Protection (pollution from plastics) Regulations.

Effective dates of implementation :

<i>Regulation 33 (1)</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Transitional Period</i>
(a)	Cease Importation of Prohibited Products	No Modification Required
(b)	Cease Manufacturing of Prohibited Products	31 st January 2022
(c)	Cease Sale of Prohibited Products	28 th February 2022
(d)	Possession of Prohibited Products	31 st March 2022

- Finally, in the wake of the rising number of COVID-19 infections and the presence of the highly contagious Omicron variant, Cabinet continues to encourage the public to wear masks in public, maintain physical distance, wash hands regularly, and for those not fully vaccinated, to get vaccinated as soon as possible. Vaccines save lives.

Ends