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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan. 24th November 2021. 4:45 p.m.

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 23rd November 2021.

- Cabinet instructed the Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security and Enterprise to conduct a study into the rising cost of living. In addition, Cabinet instructed the minister to introduce legislation at the next sitting of the House of Representatives ensuring that all necessary legal mechanisms are in place for the relevant authority to pursue merchants and shop owners engaged in price gouging.
- The Prime Minister along with the Ministerial Consultative Team convened the first meeting with the Social Partnership Committee to review government's performance for the past six months. The consultation was in partial fulfilment of government's undertaking that was laid out in a letter sent by the Prime Minister to the joint unions dated 18th May 2021. The Ministerial Consultative Team provided an update on the state of government's finances, held discussions on efforts to achieve government's Plan Belize agenda on good governance as well as agreed on a term of reference for future meetings including biennial meetings of the Social Partnership Committee.
- Hon. Michel Chebat, Minister of Health & Wellness, informed Cabinet that in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Technology, 45 Belizeans were awarded scholarships to study nursing at the University of Belize. Valuing more than a quarter million dollars, these scholarships were granted to qualified students with outstanding academic performance.
- Cabinet was updated on the status of vaccinations and the number of vaccines available in Belize. Currently, there are more than 369,588 vaccines available. As of 23rd November 2021, 208,621 persons or 48.5 percent had received at least one dose of the vaccine and 192,206 or 44.7 percent have been fully vaccinated. Also, for the first time since the start of the third wave, the daily positivity rate fell to 5.4 percent, an indication that the nation is moving in the right direction.
- Cabinet mandated that effective Thursday, 25th November 2021, all motor omnibuses are permitted to carry 100 percent seating capacity. All bus operators are required to continue adhering to the COVID-19 regulations and ensuring that all their buses are sanitized properly, that passengers continue to wear their face masks properly, and sanitize prior to boarding the buses. It is the responsibility of bus operators to prohibit passengers without a face

mask and to remove any passenger in violation. Failure to do so will result in fines to be levied upon operators.

- Cabinet approved recommendations from the Ministry of Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management to reintroduce legislation in the National Assembly for Belize to become a State Party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES). This will allow for Belize to fulfill its commitments to address the illegal trade of endangered species of fauna and flora, to promote the management, conservation, and protection of endangered species and to establish the necessary legal structures enabling the effective regulation of international trade of CITES listed species in compliance with international obligations.
- Cabinet gave its approval for the Minister of Rural Transformation, Community Development, Labour and Local Government to conduct a comprehensive review of the Labour Act, including a review of new regulations in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the ministry was requested to formulate a plan for the gradual implementation of government's commitment to reaching a five-dollar minimum wage.
- Finally, as the holiday season draws near, Cabinet continues to encourage those not yet vaccinated to do so and reminds Belizeans who have been fully vaccinated for more than six months that booster shots are now available. The public is reminded to maintain physical distance, wash hands regularly, and wear a mask or face covering in public.

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