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PRESS RELEASE

Ministry to Implement New ePassports

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The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration hereby informs of the transition from the design phase of the new ePassports to the process phase of the new Electronic Passport Issuance and Control System (ePICS).

On November 4, 2021, a kick-off meeting was held with the project stakeholders including the Department of Nationality and Passports, Belize Police Department, the Office of the Accountant General, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade, and Immigration, the Ministry of Youth, Sports, and E-governance, the Central Information Technology Office, the Office of the Solicitor General, the International Organization of Migration. Topics at this session included the project management in reference to the scope of the project, deliverables, timelines, communication, and team roles.

Currently, the ministry is hosting a team from the Canadian Bank Note Limited (CBN). For the next two weeks, the CBN and the ministry's teams will be engaged in technical meetings with the project stakeholders. This engagement includes visits to the offices in Corozal Town, Belize City, and Belmopan, the only three locations where Belizeans can currently apply for passports. When the new ePICS system comes online in August 2022, acceptance of applications will be extended to offices in Punta Gorda Town, Independence Village, Dangriga Town, and Orange Walk Town. Additionally, there will be an online portal for renewals.

The new ePICS system and ePassports will be incredibly secure, and will allow for efficient processing through modern border management systems. It will be a symbol of national pride for Belizeans and will establish a bond of trust between Belize and those countries reading it. Furthermore, it will open Belizeans to travel globally with less restrictions.

The National Institute of Culture and History (NICH), the Belize Tourism Board, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade contributed immensely to the design phase of the new ePassports.

CBN has customers in 80 countries and a proven track record in addressing travel document security threats with technological innovations in design, manufacturing, printing, and biometrics technology. Their solutions are constantly evolving to counter new and emerging security threats and they work closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization to ensure that documents exceed international standards.

This initiative is in line with the strategic plans of the Ministry and the Department of Nationality and Passports, the Global Compact on Migration, the Government of Belize's eGovernance strategy, and Plan Belize's immigration policy as well as international and regional agreements that advance Belize's development.

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