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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan, 2ⁿᵈ February 2023.

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met in regular session on 31ˢᵗ January 2023.

- After learning of some of the challenges and concerns currently facing producers in the Dairy Sector, Cabinet requested that the Minister of Agriculture, Food Security & Enterprise along with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade & Immigration initiate a comprehensive assessment of the sector in Belize.

- Cabinet approved plans for the Ministry of Public Utilities, Energy, Logistics & E-Governance to execute the development of a roadmap and implementation plan for the launch of a National Identification Project. This project will include the establishment of a civil registry authority and will be implemented over the next three years.

  Additionally, Cabinet gave its approval for the ministry to lay before the Senate articles of accession to the Convention on Facilitation of International Traffic. This will enhance Belize's maritime operations, geared at enhancing trade, facilitating shipping and the carriage of passengers through the digitalization of the processes at the ports in Belize.

- Cabinet gave its endorsement of two initiatives to enhance dialogue and coordination among the countries of the Mesoamerican region. The Regional Action Plan for Public and Private Actors for the Implementation of Short Sea Shipping in Mesoamerica and the Mesoamerica Agenda for Transportation, Mobility and Logistics will assist in building consensus, cooperation, coordination and attract resources to strengthen the Mesoamerican integration and development processes. The Mesoamerica Project is comprised of Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama.

- Cabinet gave its approval for the introduction of the Legal Aid Bill 2023 to put in place a proper legal structure to provide legal aid services to indigent citizens and to ensure that they are provided with adequate legal services. This bill will be introduced at this Friday's sitting of the House of Representatives. In this connection, Cabinet also approved amendments to the Senior Courts Act to repeal Section 225 for legal aid to be managed through the Legal Aid Commission and not the Office of the Registrar.

- Cabinet also gave its approval for the repeal and replacement of the Extraditions Act, Chapter 112 of the Substantive Laws of Belize to allow for a more effective and efficient extradition regime.

- Cabinet welcomed the announcement by the Attorney General that the Vital Statistics Unit will shortly commence mobile clinics in southern Belize to effect birth registration in rural communities in the south of Belize.

- Cabinet endorsed the establishment of a Women Parliamentarians Caucus as a joint standing committee of the National Assembly. This will allow for a formal space to address issues of gender equality, greater participation in the legislative process, and the sensitizing of the National Assembly's work through a gender lens.

- Cabinet approved the presentation of a loan motion at the next sitting of the House of Representatives for US$10 million to promote the digitization of firms and government agencies, to promote growth and increase efficiency in Belize's economy and reduce costs for citizens through the digitization of civil registration services. This loan is being facilitated through the Inter-American Development Bank on favourable terms.

- Cabinet gave its approval for the introduction of amendments to the Money Laundering and Terrorism Prevention Bill to satisfy the requirements of the Financial Task Force with respect to laws regarding national anti-money laundering, combatting the financing of terrorism and combatting proliferation financing.

- Finally, Cabinet congratulates the 50 Belizeans and their families on the acquisition of their new homes located at Blackberry Ridge Estates, a new residential community in Burrell Boom Village.

Ends