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PRESS RELEASE

Cabinet Brief

Belmopan, October 11, 2024.

The Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño, met on 8th October 2024.

- Cabinet gave its approval for the extension of the hours of operation for the clearance of cargo at the Belize Western Border at Benque Viejo del Carmen. Once finalized, the opening hours will be from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Mondays to Saturdays. In addition, the Western Border will operate from 4:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily for the facilitation of passengers and vehicles with non-commercial goods.
- Cabinet authorized the Minister with responsibility for Local Government to fix and declare new boundaries for the seven towns in Belize to align them with the growth and expansion of these towns. Likewise, Cabinet requested that the Minister meet with the relevant authorities to begin consultations for the future demarcation of the boundaries of villages and communities across Belize.
- Having regard to the Belize Blue Bond Agreement signed in November 2021, Cabinet gave its approval for the expansion of Belize's Biodiversity Protection Zone to 25 percent in fulfillment of Milestone #4. This is in partial achievement of Belize's obligation under the Agreement to protect up to 30 percent of its total ocean space by 2030.
- Cabinet welcomed the report of the completion of the technical negotiations between Belize and the Republic of El Salvador for a Partial Scope Trade Agreement, and gave its support for the process that will lead to the completion of the Agreement.
- Cabinet considered the Draft Maya Customary Land Tenure Policy, made suggestions as to improving on the salient features, and asked for the sharing thereof with interested parties to arrive at finalization and the subsequent move to drafting legislation. Cabinet also acknowledged the extensive consultations held and the requirement to advance the ruling of the Caribbean Court of Justice of 2015.
- Cabinet gave its support for the introduction of the Movable Property Security Rights Bill at the next sitting of the House of Representatives. This bill, once enacted, will bring favourable benefits to the private sector, fostering growth, innovation, and development particularly for micro, small and medium enterprises

- To enhance oversight of pharmaceutical products in Belize, Cabinet has approved the repeal of the Food and Drug (Registration, Licensing, and Inspection) Regulations. This will be replaced with a modernized legislation designed to meet current needs and ensure the safety and efficacy of medicines accessed by Belizeans.
- Cabinet gave its approval for the implementation of activities to strengthen the transition to and implementation of standards for **biodegradable**/biobased products. This initiative will significantly reduce plastic pollution from adversely impacting Belize's environment.
- The Government of Belize is enhancing the criminal records registry to streamline the application process, making it more accessible and efficient for all Belizeans. As part of this initiative, the service is being fully digitized, allowing applicants to apply and make payments either online or at designated cashier locations. Criminal records will be available for collection in all districts and can also be delivered conveniently via email. The new system will also enable applicants to track the status of their applications through email and SMS notifications, providing a more transparent and user-friendly experience. This initiative reflects the Government's commitment to improving public services for the benefit of all citizens.
- Cabinet noted the assumption of Belize to the Vice-presidency of OLADE and approved the signing of a Joint Declaration titled "No More Coal-Fired Power Plants in Latin America and the Caribbean." This Declaration, to be signed by the energy ministers from several countries in the region, seeks to adopt measures to prevent environmental pollution caused by the exploitation, transportation, storage, and utilization of energy resources within the region.
- Finally, Cabinet wishes all Belizeans a happy Day of Resistance Holiday.

Ends

