



## **COVID-19 SAFETY MEASURES CONTINUE TO BE A CHALLENGE IN LARGE PUBLIC SPACES**

News Release – 1 February 2022

Controller of the National Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, David Manning, has responded to concerns raised in media concerning a public event that was held in Mendi over the past week and was attended by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Manning said the issues raised in relation to crowd numbers and social distancing will be an ongoing issue that will continue to be managed as the Nation moves towards the upcoming National Elections.

“The organisers of the event were aware of limitations on the number of people attending an event, and as such this was to be a low-key visit,” Controller Manning said.

“I am informed that public awareness had been carried out as to the Covid-19 restrictions by the Provincial Administrator as the appointed delegate in the province.

“However, the very presence of the Prime Minister compelled many more to turn up as was evident on the day.

“The event was held in a large open public space where it is challenging to control the attendance of people.

“Initially the crowd had been sparsely spread, but as the excitement of the event increased, the crowd moved in closer.

“It appears that the people who attended had a strong desire to witness the event and support the launching of the government funded project.

“This is very much a risk that has been taken by all those who attended who did not self-distance from others, or wear a mask.

“Ultimately, in such a large public open space there are limitations on the measures that can be implemented to control crowd surges.

“We further anticipate this is a challenge during the upcoming National Elections where there will be gatherings in public spaces.

“It is important for all of our people to do their best to observe COVID-19 safety protocols if they attend such an event. This is in the interests of everyone attending an event, and their families.

“It is also incumbent upon event organisers to continue to do all they can to ensure there is public awareness of safety measures at public events.”

A large, bold, black handwritten signature that spans across the width of the page.

**David Manning, MBE, O.St.J, DPS, QPM**  
Controller, COVID-19 National Control Centre  
Commissioner of Police