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PRESS RELEASE

Government Explains Acquisition of Land for New Hospital in Belmopan

Belmopan, August 14, 2024.

In April 2023, Cabinet approved the construction of a modern national referral tertiary care hospital that would also serve as a university hospital for the University of Belize, which would be funded by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by way of a US\$45m loan through the Saudi Arabia Fund for Development. This proposed hospital was approved by the House of Representatives on 19th May 2023, and signed into law in June of 2023. On 16th April 2024 Cabinet gave its approval for the relocation of the proposed Belmopan Tertiary Hospital, to a more accessible location near the George Price and Hummingbird Highways.

After a thorough review and having received a technical report and a presentation on the merits of the relocation by technocrats from the Ministry of Health and Wellness, Cabinet accepted the recommendation and determined that the original site proposed by the University of Belize would not be ideal to meet Government's commitment to providing access to the timely delivery of universal health coverage, especially to residents of the Cayo District, due to the following factors:

1. The proposed site for the construction of the Hospital is 9 kilometres from the George Price Highway;
2. Getting to the Hospital's location would require a circuitous route, which included driving through residential neighbourhoods;
3. Lack of water or electricity near the UB proposed site for the construction of the hospital;

4. Government would have to purchase land to construct a road to reach the hospital;
5. Difficulty for hospital employees and workers who would have to bear the expense of travelling to and from work, which would include a 9-kilometre commute each way.

The recently acquired property for the construction of the hospital will provide the following advantages:

1. Easier road access for effective and lifesaving transfers from the western and southern districts;
2. Easier access to the Hospital by the residents of Belmopan who use public and private transportation;
3. Located near the Belmopan Airstrip, it will provide for easier airlift;
4. Improved road connectivity, which saves time;
5. Improved overall healthcare climate resiliency; and
6. Additional land asset for the University of Belize.

After Cabinet's decision to relocate the Belmopan tertiary hospital, valuations were conducted by both private and government valuers to determine the market value of the two properties identified.

The final price of \$6.9m for the combined 15 acres of roadside land was agreed upon - a figure much less than what the landowners were requesting, those landowners being Annie Zhu and Kenny Zheng.

Cabinet's only objective in supporting the recommendation to relocate the Hospital remains its commitment to providing universal health coverage and ensuring the highest standards of healthcare delivery for all Belizeans.

Government supports the recommendation from the Ministry of Health and Wellness that the proposed relocation of the tertiary-level hospital will afford quality, accessible care to Belizeans. Together with the University of Belize, a top-notch healthcare facility and teaching hospital will be constructed in an ideal location that meets the diverse needs of our population and enhances the overall healthcare landscape in Belize.

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