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PRESS RELEASE

Prime Minister Signs Loan Agreement with Saudi Fund for Development to Construct Tertiary Hospital

Belmopan, May 31, 2023.

On May 30, Prime Minister Hon. John Briceño signed a US\$45-million development loan agreement with the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) for the construction of a tertiary hospital in Belmopan. His Excellency Ahmed Al Khateeb, Saudi Arabia's Minister of Tourism and Chairman of the Board of Directors of SFD, signed on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The signing is part of efforts taken by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to support developing countries and small island developing states like Belize to overcome sustainable development and climate change challenges. This agreement, therefore, emphasizes the kingdom's commitment.

Witnessing the signing were Hon. Anthony Mahler, Minister of Tourism and Diaspora Relations; Hon. Kevin Bernard, Minister of Health & Wellness; Hon. Christopher Coye, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment; Mrs. Narda Garcia, CEO in the Office of the Prime Minister and Investment and H.E. Haisam Diab.

More than 200,000 citizens are expected to benefit from the new state-of-the-art medical facility which will provide both secondary and tertiary healthcare services. Additionally, the new facility will serve a dual role as the university hospital for the University of Belize's Faculty of Medicine, providing an enabling environment to foster the growth and development of future medical professionals.

Belmopan is an ideal location for the hospital, which will not only serve residents of western and southern Belize but will also provide an alternative for the evacuation of patients from the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital during natural disasters, should the need arise. This will ensure the continuation of medical services before, during, and after such events.

Prior to the signing, the delegations held a bilateral meeting during which H.E. Al Khateeb informed the Prime Minister that funding was also approved to the Government of Belize for the construction of a solar energy plant that will assist the country in meeting its energy needs using an eco-friendly energy source. The solar energy plant discussions also dovetailed on the advantage to continue promoting Belize as an eco-tourism destination. Following an invitation from Prime Minister Briceño to participate in the upcoming Belize Investment Summit, scheduled for August 30 to September 1 in San Pedro Town, the Saudi Minister of Tourism committed the participation of government officials and private sector representatives from Saudi Arabia.

Since its establishment in 1974, SFD has implemented more than 700 development projects and programs worldwide. Belize is the 88th country to benefit from SFD funding for a development project.

The people and Government of Belize thank the people and Government of the Kingdom of Saudia Arabia for their support, which will ensure that every citizen is afforded access to affordable and quality healthcare and healthcare facilities.

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