



For Immediate Release

Date: October 4, 2024

Press Release

Land Exchange Agreement between the

Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries and the University of Belize

Belmopan – The Ministry of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries (MHANGI) is pleased to announce the signing of a Land Exchange Agreement (Agreement) with the University of Belize (UB), which occurred today October 4, 2024, in Belmopan.

This significant milestone is the culmination of over two years of negotiations between UB and the National Forensic Science Service (NFSS). The Agreement stems from the NFSS's need to relocate from Ladyville to a more central and strategic site where expansion of the NFSS can occur to better meet the country's needs in forensic science and legal medicine. Through the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (CABEI) funded Belize Integral Security Programme (BISP), the NFSS will benefit from the design and construction of a modern forensic laboratory and forensic morgue complex. Since a memorandum of understanding already exists between the NFSS and UB for collaboration regarding teaching, training, and research opportunities, the Agreement reached between the MHANGI and UB will only serve to enhance the partnership between both institutions of national importance.

As part of the Agreement, the MHANGI will transfer to UB 1.28 acres of land situated in Ladyville where the NFSS is currently located in exchange for 12 acres of UB's property in Belmopan which will be used for the new NFSS complex. The Ministry of Natural Resources, Petroleum and Mining (MNRPM) has been instrumental during the process of negotiating and finalizing the Agreement and will facilitate the land transfers once the NFSS has completely relocated to its new facility in Belmopan after construction.

During the brief signing ceremony Dr. Vincent Palacio, President of the UB expressed "this land exchange represents a strategic advantage for the University of Belize, allowing us to expand our academic programs, including the recently launched School of Medicine. Our relationship with the National Forensic Science Service has been ongoing for some time, with fruitful collaborations in resource sharing, internships, and teaching. This action is a continuation of that particularly

beneficial partnership, offering further opportunities for our students in forensic science, allied health fields, and the Criminology and Criminal Justice program started last year."

Hon. Kareem Musa, Minister of Home Affairs and New Growth Industries further added that "the signing of this land exchange agreement for forensic science marks a significant milestone in advancing the infrastructure and capacity of our efforts in contributing to the criminal justice system; it reflects this government's commitment to improving forensic facilities, which are critical to modernizing law enforcement efforts, enhancing laboratory services, and supporting the judicial process".

ENDS.

For more information contact: the National Forensic Science Service at info@forensics.gov.bz or 205-2164.

The University of Belize at communications@ub.edu.bz or 822-1000.