

MoBay to get 5-star medical tourism facility

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JAMAICA appears set to get its first five-star medical tourism facility following yesterday's announcement of a US\$170-million (\$16-billion) greenfield development project in Montego Bay, St James.

Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with US consortium American Global MD (AGMD) to build the "fully amenitised" 200-bed hospital and medical facility that will target the North American and Caribbean markets.

"This investment is in keeping with the Government's commitment to the development of the medical tourism industry as a major area of growth for Jamaica. I wish to commend the significant work of JAMPRO to bring us to this stage in a joined-up Government way with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Tourism," said Minister of Industry, Investment and Commerce Anthony Hylton, who signed the MOU yesterday with Health Minister Fenton Ferguson and Tourism Minister Wykeham McNeil.

AGMD is a consortium of American-trained physicians and investors, all of whom have strong Jamaican links as a result of having previously studied or practised in the country, said JAMPRO, the state promotion agency, in a press release.

The investment, upon completion, will provide employment opportunities for Jamaican doctors, nurses and other medical-related personnel, delivering services ranging from elective surgeries, rehabilitation and naturopathy, the organisation said.

Under the first phase of the project, a 50 - 75 bed patient facility will be constructed to offer plastic and cosmetic surgery, bariatric services and dental specialties.

The Government's Health & Wellness Tourism policy that was informed by a cross-ministerial team, seeks to lay out the framework for positioning the country as the newest destination for medical and wellness tourism. These efforts were set in train by a comprehensive JAMPRO-led study of the industry's potential that was completed in 2011, with the assistance of the Commonwealth Secretariat. Most recently, Cabinet has approved the mechanism for the development of the medical tourism industry and will be establishing a steering committee with major industry stakeholders to guide the finalisation of the policy and regulatory framework.

Globally, the medical tourism industry is valued at over US\$40 billion in 2010, with major markets in the industry generating over 1.5 million medical tourists.