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Ferguson

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ST ANN'S BAY, St Ann:

HEALTH MINISTER Dr Fenton Ferguson, last Friday, opened the newly built female medical ward at the St Ann's Bay Regional Hospital, describing the new addition as a demonstration of the Government's commitment to building secondary-care infrastructure as part of an overall drive to develop the public-health sector in a holistic way.

The 47-bed facility was constructed by WG Walters Construction and funded by the National Health Fund (NHF) at an initial estimate of \$73 million. The final figure of \$136.7 million represents the total expenditure for the project, including furniture and equipment for the ward.

The construction of the new ward was prompted after a visit by the minister in November 2012 revealed the overcrowding situation at the regional hospital, which has seen increased patient admissions over the years.

What existed at the time was a situation where patients had to spend hours sitting in chairs in the emergency room waiting for a bed. Patients were also being discharged prematurely, after 72 hours, because of unavailability of bed space.

"I noted at the time that about 40 per cent of patients in the A-and-E department waiting for a bed were destined for the female medical ward, which simply did not have the capacity to accommodate them," Ferguson stated. "Under this project, 47 rooms were constructed which will help to satisfy a critical need and increase the hospital's overall bed capacity by about 20 per cent."

\$1.5B invested

Ferguson said that since 2012 the Government has invested nearly \$1.5 billion in improving the secondary-care infrastructure across the island.

"Nearly \$600 million of that amount was spent in the North East region. Importantly, more than half of that allocation or \$325 million was spent or is in the process of being spent at the St Ann's Bay Regional Hospital," he continued.

The scope of the work included painting and refurbishing of buildings on the campus, improvements in storage, purchase of equipment, installation of central air conditioning for the Accident and Emergency Department, construction of a perimeter wall, which is now in the procurement stage, and the construction of the female medical ward.

The minister later visited Claremont in the parish where he opened the Claremont Health Centre which was renovated at a cost of over \$40.6 million.

The work involved construction of a new waiting area, pavement of driveway and parking, new perimeter fencing, construction of a 2,500-square-foot building, upgrade of sanitary facilities, among other work.

The upgrade was also funded by the NHF.

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