



Press Release

Government Resolves Issues on Abolishing SAIMT

The 9-member Committee appointed by HE the President was tasked with implementing the steps outlined in the Presidential Communiqué of 29.10.2017, which provided the following solution to this crisis: **the abolition of SAIMT in a manner legally acceptable to the current shareholders, lending institutions and the new entity interested in taking over all operations and management of SAIMT, via the transferral of all SAIMT's assets, liabilities, staff and students to a non-state, not-for-profit degree-awarding entity that complies with the Minimum Standards on Medical Education and Training.** The legal process to carry this out will require the creation of two separate entities, both in compliance with the Minimum Standards:

- a. A new not-for-profit 'sunset' institution that will absorb all students who were in SAIMT's medical program, as well its assets and liabilities; at which point SAIMT will be abolished. The sunset institution will conclude operations when the last current batches of students graduate. No new students will be admitted to this entity.
- b. A new not-for-profit 'sunrise' institution that will start accepting new students from 2019.

On 30.12.2017, the Government signed a Memorandum of Understanding with SAIMT and the Sri Lanka Institute of Information Technology (SLIIT). According to this MoU, with the abolition of SAIMT, SLIIT, a leading non-state, not-for-profit degree awarding institute, will establish the new sunset and sunrise institutions, under the guidance of the Government that will take over ownership and management of SAIMT's assets, liabilities, staff and students. Subject to the approval of the Attorney General's Department, this MoU will be converted into a legal agreement.

This solution resolves both concerns raised by various groups. They are:

1. That SAIMT does not meet Sri Lanka's high standards for medical education.
 2. That SAIMT's profit motive will pervert the goal of creating good doctors.
1. The Sri Lanka Medical Council (SLMC), which establishes and maintains national standards for the medical profession, proposed a thorough set of Minimum Standards for Medical Education and Training that was accepted by the Cabinet with minor amendments on 13.12.2017. This filled a major void in ensuring high standards of medical education.

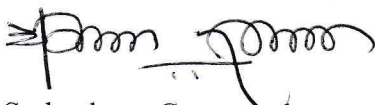
- a. Medical education and training of the ‘sunset’ institution will be approved by the SLMC in accordance with the Minimum Standards. The SLMC will specify further measures (clinical training and assessment in state hospitals) necessary for students who have received degrees from SAIMT, to meet these Standards and thereby gain Provisional Registration.
 - b. The SLMC will grant fresh approval for the ‘sunrise’ institution upon its meeting Minimum Standards, through an institutional review and site visits as per their mandate and standard practice for this purpose.
2. The ‘sunset’ and ‘sunrise’ institutions will not operate for profit. The ‘sunrise’ institution will be a company limited by guarantee that charges fees, but re-invests any excess income over expenditure in the institution, including in the provision of scholarships based on financial need. SLIIT is an ideal partner in this effort, with two decades of experience in providing high-quality, not-for-profit higher education.

Thus this practical and equitable solution recognizes, addresses, and resolves the concerns expressed against SAIMT, and is fully compliant with the Communiqué issued by HE the President on 29.10.2017.

Additionally, the Neville Fernando Teaching Hospital will be transferred to the Ministry of Health, allowing the State medical sector to gain a Rs. 3.2 billion asset at no cost to the State.

The solution has the unanimous approval of the 9-member Committee, which was Chaired by Hon (Dr) Harsha de Silva, Deputy Minister of National Policies and Economic Affairs, and includes the Secretaries to the Ministries of Health, Nutrition and Indigenous Medicine, and of Higher Education and Highways; President of the SLMC; Chairman of the University Grants Commission; Vice Chancellors of the Universities of Colombo and Sri Jayewardenepura; and Medical Faculty Deans of the Universities of Colombo and Kelaniya. This Committee met thrice to debate and improve this solution, with the participation of the Association of Medical Specialists, Sri Lanka Medical Association, Government Medical Officers’ Association, Federation of Faculty Medical Teachers’ Association, Government Medical Students’ Parents’ Association, and SAIMT Medical Students’ Parents’ Association, as observers.

This solution makes the people of Sri Lanka the winners. We hope that it will not be obstructed by those willing to wager our children’s futures for the sake of politics.



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