

PRESS RELEASE

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Contract Signed For A.O. Shirley Recreation Ground Track Resurfacing

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The Virgin Islands took a significant step forward in the development of sports infrastructure with the signing of a contract for the Supply, Installation and Supervision Services for the Track Resurfacing of the A.O. Shirley Recreation Ground.

The contract was signed between the Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) and Mondo America Inc. for the delivery of a new track surface at the Territory's premier athletics facility. The project, valued at \$1.2 million, is funded through a partnership between the Government of the Virgin Islands and the BVI Olympic Committee (BVIOC) through PanAm Sports, and will be implemented by the RDA.

This initial phase of the project is expected to be completed over a four-month period. The specialised certified track system will first undergo an estimated two-month manufacturing process, followed by an approximately two-month shipping period to the Virgin Islands.

Phase two will commence once the track is delivered and in the Territory. The existing track will be removed and replaced with the new internationally certified surface, paving the way for the facility to regain and retain its status as a venue capable of hosting regional and international athletics competitions.

The signing ceremony was attended by Government officials, representatives of the sporting community, and key project stakeholders, underscoring the collective commitment to strengthening athletics and sporting opportunities in the Virgin Islands.

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, described the signing as a significant investment in the Territory's people and sporting future, noting that the project reflects Government's commitment to providing athletes with modern, high-quality facilities that support excellence in sport and youth development.

"As we sign this contract for the resurfacing of the AO Shirley Recreation Ground Track, we are doing more than fulfilling a procedural milestone," said the Premier.

Honourable Wheatley added, "We are sealing an investment in our athletes, in our youth, and in the future of sports in the Virgin Islands. The A.O. Shirley Recreation Ground is the heart of athletics in the Virgin Islands."

Minister for Education, Youth Affairs and Sports, Honourable Sharie B. de Castro, described the resurfacing project as an investment in the future of athletics.

"Every race begins with a starting block. Every dream begins with an opportunity, and every champion needs a track beneath their feet. For generations, the A.O. Shirley Recreation Ground has been the starting block for the Virgin Islands, and today we are taking another major step forward with the complete resurfacing of this track — a significant investment in the future of Virgin Islands sports."

Hon. de Castro reflected on Government's commitment to strengthening the Territory's sporting infrastructure and highlighted the importance of providing athletes with facilities that match their talent and ambition.

"Over the last three years, the Government has invested more than \$1.5 million directly into athletes and sporting organisations. But if we invest in talent, we must also invest in the places that help produce that talent. Medals may be won on the world stage, but greatness is built long before that".

Chairman of the RDA Board of Directors, Mr. Jerry Samuel, endorsed the vision to leverage the upgraded facility as a catalyst for sports tourism and economic development in the Virgin Islands.

"The Minister's vision is to see this facility used in a serious way to promote sports tourism, and that vision should be supported. It has the potential to contribute to the diversification of the Territory's tourism product and strengthen its economic base."

Mr. Samuel also highlighted the Recovery and Development Agency's role in delivering transformative public infrastructure projects, noting that the Agency was well positioned to implement an initiative of this significance.

"As you know, the RDA has a well-established mandate to deliver significant public projects across key sectors. It should come as no surprise that Minister de Castro

chose to have the RDA implement this important project. Minister, thank you for making that choice, and I commend you for doing it."

Remarks were also delivered by the President of the BVI Athletics Association and Commonwealth Sports Association Mr. Ephraim Penn, the President of the BVI Athletics Association Mr. Steve Augustine and Mr. Michael Tovar Director of Mondo Track Division of Mondo America Inc. The ceremony was chaired by the RDA's Director of Procurement, Mr. Jonathan Jn. Baptiste.

This project is intended to restore the track to the standards required to retain World Athletics Class 2 Certification, improve athlete safety, and extend the service life of the facility. The upgraded surface will provide athletes with an enhanced training and competition environment that meets international performance standards while supporting community recreation and sporting development.

The partnership between the Government of the Virgin Islands, the BVI Olympic Committee, PanAm Sports, Mondo America Inc, and the RDA reflects a shared commitment to advancing athletics and ensuring that local athletes have access to facilities that support training, competition, and achievement at the highest levels.

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