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Government Moves to Establish a Permanent National Development Agency

Premier and Minister of Finance, Honourable Dr. Natalio D. Wheatley, has introduced legislation in the House of Assembly that will transform the Recovery and Development Agency (RDA) into a permanent institution responsible for delivering nationally significant development and infrastructure projects across The Virgin Islands.

Premier Wheatley, while moving the Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2026 for its second reading, said the legislation represents "the next stage in the evolution of one of The Virgin Islands' most important public institutions". He said this demonstrates Government's commitment to ensuring that the Territory's legislative framework keeps pace with its changing development priorities.

While the Bill proposes renaming the Recovery and Development Agency as the Virgin Islands Development Agency (VIDA), the Premier emphasised that the legislation goes far beyond a name change. He stated: "The new name reflects a broader transformation from an institution established primarily to coordinate recovery to one that will serve as a permanent partner in delivering the Territory's long-term development agenda."

The Premier reflected on the circumstances that led to the RDA's creation in 2018 following Hurricanes Irma and Maria, noting that it had successfully coordinated the Territory's recovery while building a reputation for professionalism, technical expertise and accountability. He pointed out that since its establishment, the RDA has managed \$69.2 million in funding, with more than 90 per cent of contracts having been awarded to local contractors, contributing to the development of local capacity.

Premier Wheatley highlighted the agency's achievements, including the redevelopment of six schools benefiting more than 1,900 students, repairs to five administration buildings, refurbishment of six police stations, rehabilitation of recreational and tourism facilities, improvements to the road network, installation of renewable energy systems, construction of water reservoirs and procurement training for contractors and interns.

The Premier said Government believes the Agency's accumulated expertise should be preserved and expanded rather than dismantled. "Government has concluded that this institutional capacity should not be dismantled at the end of the recovery period. Instead, it should be preserved and redirected towards supporting the Territory's long-term development priorities," he added.

Among its key reforms, the legislation:

- Renames the Recovery and Development Agency as the Virgin Islands Development Agency;
- Expands the Agency's mandate to support long-term national development;
- Introduces an infrastructure planning framework linked to the National Sustainable Development Plan;
- Strengthens governance, transparency and accountability measures;

- Clarifies the respective roles of the Minister, Board and Executive Management;
- Enhances financial reporting, auditing and procurement arrangements; and
- Removes provisions that contemplated the Agency's eventual dissolution.

The Virgin Islands Recovery and Development Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2026 is now before the House of Assembly for consideration during the debate and Committee Stages.

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About:

The Government of The Virgin Islands is committed to promoting good governance and the sustainable development of the Territory with a view to ensuring a well-informed, prosperous, cohesive, and stable society. The Premier's Office serves as the focal point for coordinating cross-sectoral policies and programmes and promoting the sustainable development of The Virgin Islands.