

# The Virgin Islands Consortium

## BVI Engineer Unveils Container Homes Concept As Affordable Alternative

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TORTOLA -- The issue of affordable housing in the British Virgin Islands was brought to the fore during the weekly luncheon meeting of the Rotary Club of Tortola.

The debate was sparked following a presentation by Engineer Kishma Penn also a Rotarian, about her latest project which was to construct a container house.

Penn described it as an affordable home for young people who find it difficult to secure money to build that dream home even though they are being given concession by the

government.

“Basically, the container homes are a good response to the call for affordable housing in the BVI,” she said while noting that \$500,000 can no longer buy a home for a family of



BVI Engineer Kishma Penn

Penn further stated that she already designed her first container house, but she is still awaiting approval from the necessary governmental authorities.

“I recently completed my first container house design and I am very excited about the project; basically awaiting the government authority’s – regulations commission to continue [with the construction],” said Penn, who also noted that the container houses can be built in various sizes and can end up looking high-end.

She added, “The concept behind the container home is, you get the container, you put them in a certain configuration – it could be three containers; it could be one; it could go 12; I have seen them stock them five-story high and – at the end of the day – you end up with a home with a nice top-end finish that didn’t necessarily break your bankbook.”

The engineer went on to state that, in terms of the ability of container houses to withstand natural disasters such as hurricane, they would have to be built with the necessary reinforcement. “You have to do various things to reinforce the structure of the container,” added Penn.

The issue relating to hurricane was raised by legislator and real estate appraiser Archibald Christian, who noted that such concern would be addressed by the Town and Country Planning Department.

He also shared the view that persons should build houses they are able to afford instead of being overly concerned about constructing large and expensive ones.

“A young person does not need a 4000 square-foot house; that’s the problem,” Christian declared.

“What we need to do is build a house you can afford; build a house that you can afford to live in; build a house that you can afford to pay the banks or wherever you borrow the money from back.”

Christian thinks the concept of the container houses is a very good one.

