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Strike Rumors Destabilizing BVI, Premier Says, Asking Gossipers to Hush

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Roadtown, Tortola, British Virgin Islands By. V.I. CONSORTIUM

At a press conference last week, BVI Premier Dr. Natalio Wheatley and Royal Virgin Islands Police Force Commissioner Mark Collins rubbished swirling rumors that public sector workers in the police force, the Ministry of Public Works, and elsewhere, were planning to protest delays in the payments of owed increments by downing tools.

“Those persons who are making mischief by sending out this false information are helping to destabilize the territory,” Mr. Wheatley said. “It’s causing a great deal of panic and concerts...I ask for those persons to stop.”

The premier said he was concerned that the persistent rumors of impending industrial action across a broad swathe of the public service could spook investors and tourists, and accused those openly speculating about a public sector strike of doing so out of political convenience.

Mr. Wheatley urged public sector workers who are discontented to utilize dialogue before considering strike action. “We remain open and engaged with persons who have areas where they have challenges,” Dr. Wheatley said.

A slew of fire officers calling in sick last Monday resulted in the shutdown of the Terrence B. Lettsome International airport for some hours, resulting in delays when at least one flight had to be rerouted to Puerto Rico. Despite this evidence of discontent among some public workers, the talk that strike action would engulf other departments including the police and customs, officials say, is not true. Some workers, however, do want to meet with the government to discuss areas of concern, the public was informed.

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