

PRESS RELEASE

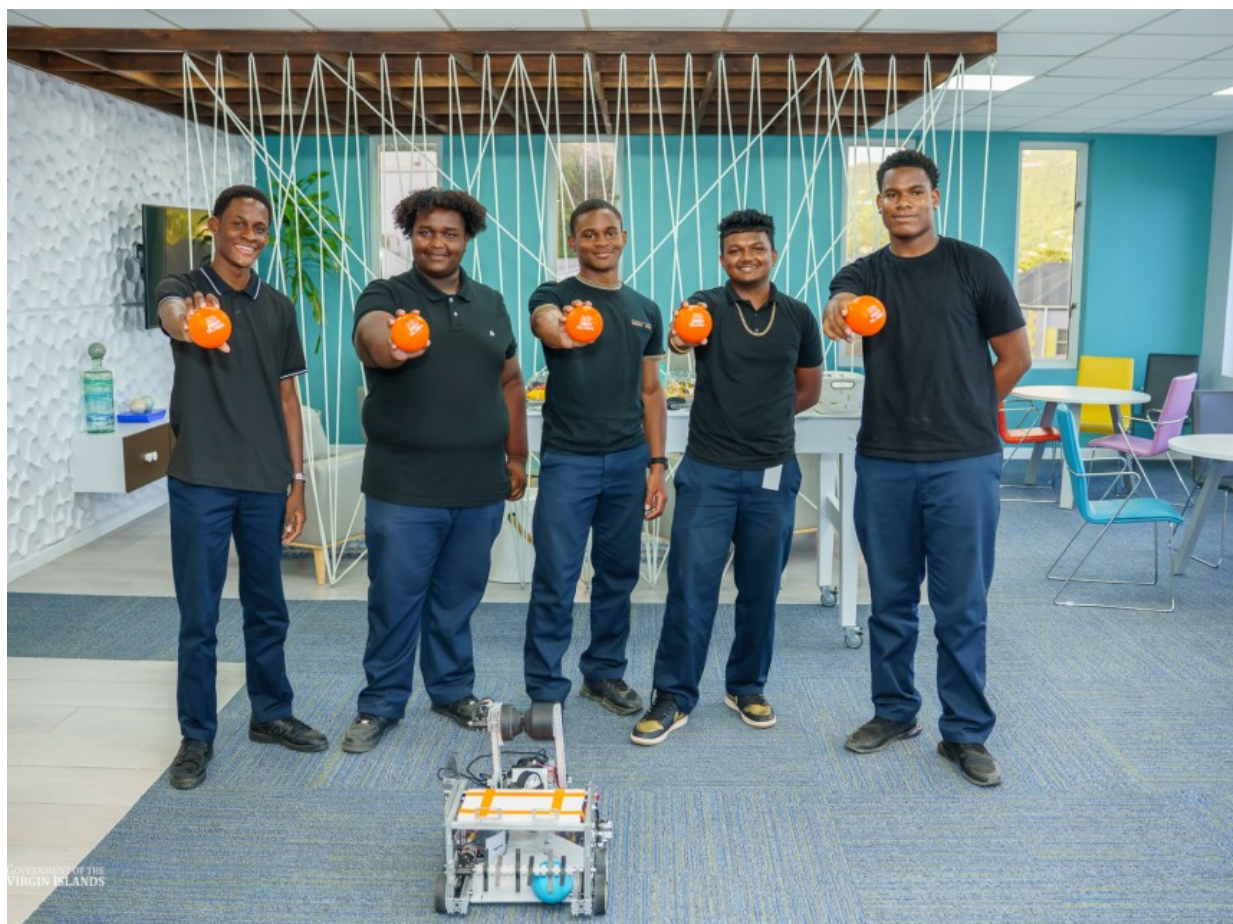
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Team BVI Heads to South Korea for 2026 First Global Challenge

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Five young Virgin Islanders are preparing to represent the Territory on the international stage as Team BVI travels to Incheon, Republic of Korea, for the 2026 FIRST Global Challenge.

The team comprises Christopher Robinson, Nicholas Joseph, Stephon Jainauth, Caleb Stoutt and Ricardo Seebaran, who will represent the Virgin Islands at the international robotics competition from 7 to 10 October. This marks the Territory's fourth consecutive year participating in the FIRST Global Challenge.

The FIRST Global Challenge is an Olympics-style international robotics competition that brings together high school-aged students from around the world to build and programme robots, compete and collaborate while exploring solutions to global challenges through science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). More than 190 national teams are expected to participate in this year's competition.

The 2026 competition will be held under the theme "Igniting Innovation", with this year's challenge focused on wildfire prevention, mitigation and recovery. Teams will use creativity, engineering and strategic gameplay to navigate a simulated environment while exploring how technology can help reduce the risks and impacts of wildfires, protect communities and strengthen environmental resilience.

First Global Team BVI enters the 2026 competition following three consecutive years of growth on the international robotics stage. The Virgin Islands made its FIRST Global debut in Singapore in 2023, placing 143rd out of 191 teams. The following year, the Territory improved its standing to 111th out of 180 teams at the competition in Athens, Greece. Government records noted the improvement as a significant step forward for the Territory's developing robotics programme.

The Territory recorded its strongest performance to date at the 2025 FIRST Global Challenge in Panama, where Team BVI climbed to 42nd globally. Five young Virgin Islanders will depart the Territory on Friday, 2 October, for Incheon, Republic of Korea, where they will represent the Virgin Islands at the 2026 FIRST Global Challenge.

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The progression from 143rd to 111th and then 42nd globally reflects the continued development of robotics and coding within the Virgin Islands education system and the growing opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate their skills on an international stage.

The 2026 team now has the opportunity to build on that foundation as a new group of students takes up the responsibility of representing the Virgin Islands at the

FIRST Global Challenge.

The team's participation is also supported through partnerships with the private sector and wider community. The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports acknowledges **Harneys, Exness and NAGICO** for their support of Team BVI and the continued development of robotics opportunities for students throughout the Territory.

Corporate partnerships continue to play an important role in the development of the programme and in creating opportunities for Virgin Islands students to participate on the international stage.

In the week leading up to their departure, members of Team BVI visited the offices of **Harneys, Exness and NAGICO**, where they met with representatives of the sponsoring organisations and demonstrated the robot they will take into competition in South Korea.

During the visits, the students showcased the robot's capabilities, discussed their preparations for the FIRST Global Challenge and shared some of the work that has gone into designing, building and programming it. The engagements also provided an opportunity for the team to personally connect with and thank the organisations supporting their journey to the global stage.

As Team BVI prepares for South Korea, the five students will carry forward the progress made by the teams that represented the Territory before them while gaining valuable international exposure through competition, collaboration and cultural exchange with students from around the world.

The Ministry of Education, Youth Affairs and Sports extends best wishes to Team BVI and encourages the Virgin Islands community to follow and support the students as they represent the Territory at the **2026 FIRST Global Challenge in Incheon, Republic of Korea, from 7 to 10 October**.

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