

Calvin Air Expands Airlift Capacity

Story on page 3



From emergency airlift readiness and active police investigations to cooler-than-usual weather and Antiguan and Barbudans shining across the region, today's issue reflects a nation managing risk, resilience, and representation.

CalvinAir_Pilatus_PC12 :: PhotoCredit Roddy Grimes-Graeme.

Editorial: Narrowing the Economic Space of Small States

The European Union's latest warning about Caribbean citizenship-by-investment programmes raises issues that extend beyond border security and migration policy. It speaks to a broader, recurring challenge faced by small states: the steady narrowing of legitimate economic options.

Citizenship by Investment did not emerge in a vacuum. Following the early experience of St Kitts and Nevis, several OECS countries adopted these programmes as a means of generating revenue for development, infrastructure, and fiscal stability in economies with limited natural resources and constrained access to capital.

Antigua and Barbuda's experience is instructive.

Over the past two decades, successive economic sectors in the country have been diminished or dismantled under external pressure. Its once-thriving on-line gaming industry was curtailed after action by the United States, despite Antigua and Barbuda prevailing at the World Trade Organization. That ruling has yet to be meaningfully honoured. Offshore banking followed a similar trajectory, shrinking under regulatory and geopolitical pressure.

Citizenship by Investment now faces comparable scrutiny.

What complicates the current debate is the uneven global landscape. Investor residency and citizenship programmes exist in Europe and elsewhere, often under different labels. Yet Caribbean programmes are repeatedly singled out for intensified examination, with the implied consequence that continued operation may come at the cost of visa-free travel for ordinary citizens.

The EU report highlights Antigua and Barbuda's relatively low rejection rate. This can be interpreted in more than one way. It may point to effective pre-screening before applications reach the formal stage. It may also re-



flect programme design choices. What is clear is that the metric is being used to question legitimacy rather than to acknowledge compliance efforts made in response to years of engagement and reform.

At stake is more than a programme, it is the principle of economic agency.

Small states are often encouraged to be innovative, resilient, and self-reliant. Yet when that innovation succeeds, it is often recast as problematic. Each adjustment demanded of Caribbean countries reduces fiscal space, in-

creases dependence, and limits policy options.

Security concerns must be addressed. Standards must evolve. But reform should be proportionate, consistent, and cognisant of the developmental realities of small island states.

Antigua and Barbuda's record shows that when an industry is removed, it is rarely replaced by an equivalent alternative in the short term. The cumulative effect is an economy that continually adjusts downward in the short to medium term, while larger states retain the flexibility to protect their own interests.

The question is no longer whether Caribbean countries should comply. It is whether the global system allows them sufficient space to build and sustain a decent quality of life for their people.

That question remains unresolved.


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CalvinAir Expands Airlift Capacity Fixed-Wing Aircraft, Strengthening Regional Connectivity

CalvinAir Helicopters has expanded its operational capacity with the addition of a Pilatus PC-12, marking a significant shift from its previously helicopter-only fleet and strengthening Antigua and Barbuda's options for regional charter and emergency medical airlift services.

The expansion comes at a time when rising medical referrals, increased regional movement, and year-end reflections on national resilience have underscored the importance of reliable, flexible air connectivity for small island states.

The acquisition of the fixed-wing aircraft represents a strategic expansion for the locally based operator, enabling it to offer longer-distance charter flights and enhanced medical evacuation support beyond the range of rotary aircraft.

CalvinAir has built its reputation on helicopter tours and charter services, operating a fleet of luxury Airbus H130 helicopters. The addition of the PC-12 broadens the company's scope, adding a high-speed, long-range aircraft capable of transporting passengers, cargo, and medical cases throughout the wider Caribbean.

The PC-12, a turboprop aircraft configured to carry up to eight passengers in a VIP layout, is known for its reliability, payload capacity, and efficient long-range performance. With cruising speeds of approximately 300 miles per hour, the aircraft significantly reduces travel times compared with helicopter operations.

According to Mark Fleming, the addition meets growing demand for flexible aviation solutions that combine comfort, speed, and operational reach. "This aircraft enables us to offer more comprehensive services, particularly on longer-distance flights, while continuing to support our vital emergency medical airlift missions," Fleming said.



CalvinAir_Pilatus_PC12 :: PhotoCredit Roddy Grimes-Graeme.

Beyond charter operations, the expanded fleet enhances Antigua and Barbuda's capacity to respond to medical emergencies requiring off-island treatment. The PC-12's range and cabin configuration enable patients to be transported to specialized medical facilities across the region, including Trinidad, without the limitations of shorter-range aircraft.

The aircraft has already been deployed in such a role, recently transporting Antiguan taxi driver Kimroy Williams to Trinidad for specialised spinal surgery after a severe condition left him unable to walk. The use of the PC-12 in this case underscored the aircraft's value as a medical airlift platform, particularly when time, distance, and patient stability are critical.

With the addition of the fixed-wing aircraft, CalvinAir now operates a mixed fleet capable of meeting private, corporate, tourism, and emergency-response needs. The company says the expanded capability enables it to respond more effectively to a range of scenarios, from executive travel to urgent medical evacuations.

Fleming noted that safety, reliability,

and readiness remain central to the company's operations as it broadens its service offerings. "Whether for charter flights or emergency missions, our goal is to provide safe, efficient, and professional service on every flight," he said.

The fleet expansion comes amid broader conversations about air connectivity, emergency preparedness, and private-sector support for national services in Antigua and Barbuda. As demand grows for timely access to regional medical care and flexible travel options, operators capable of bridging gaps in distance and infrastructure are playing an increasingly important role.

CalvinAir's move into fixed-wing operations positions the company as a more versatile aviation provider, complementing existing commercial services and addressing needs that are not always met by scheduled airlines.

In that context, the expansion reflects more than a company milestone, underscoring the evolving role of private aviation in strengthening Antigua and Barbuda's national readiness and its connections throughout the wider Caribbean.

Local News

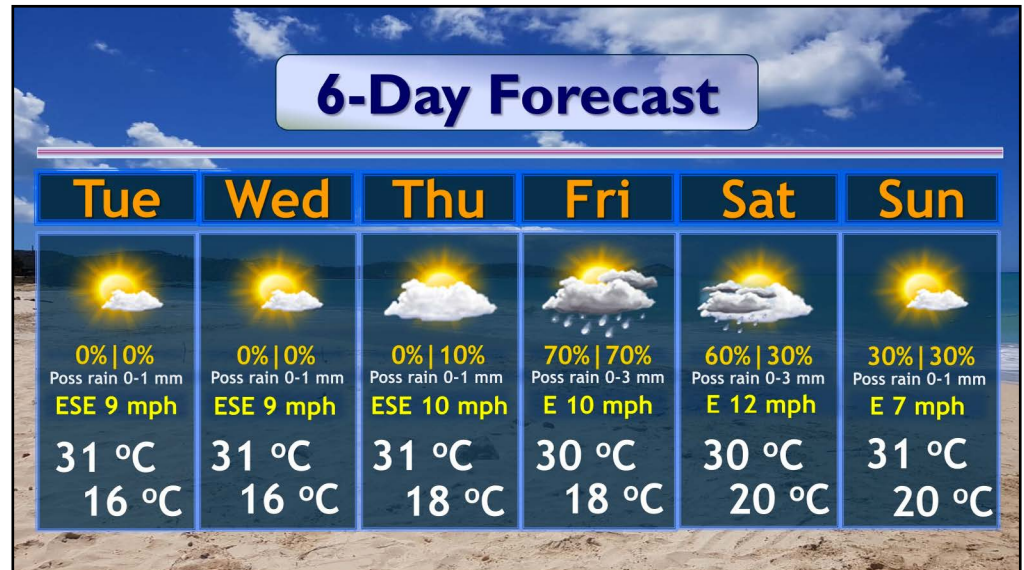
When the Tropics Turn Cold: Antigua and Barbuda's Near-Record Chill

Antigua and Barbuda rarely calls for sweaters. Yet over the past several nights, many residents reached for light layers as temperatures dipped to levels rarely seen in the tropics.

According to Dale C. S. Destin, the country experienced near-record cold nights, with minimum temperatures ranging from 14°C to 23°C across the islands. Although not the first time, the readings place this cold spell among the most significant in recent decades. "While such temperatures are not unprecedented," Destin noted, "last night's readings were near record-low levels, especially when viewed through the lens of long-term observations at the V. C. Bird International Airport."

Antigua and Barbuda does not yet have long-term temperature records from multiple inland or elevated locations. As a result, V. C. Bird International Airport remains the country's primary climate reference point.

Using that dataset, Destin explained that December 27 and 28, 2025, now rank as the second coldest on record for those dates, with minimum tem-



peratures of 18.1°C and 18.8°C, respectively. The only colder readings occurred in 1974 and 1976, which were among the coldest years on record.

But the Airport tells only part of the story. Across Antigua and Barbuda, temperatures fell as low as 14°C, well below what was recorded at the Airport. Destin explained that inland valleys, rural areas, and higher elevations can be several degrees colder, some-

times by as much as 7°C.

"On average, temperatures were about 4°C below the usual 18–27°C," he explained, adding that while modest by temperate standards, such a shift represents a dramatic change in the tropics.

Applying this relationship to historic cold events suggests that parts of the country may have experienced temperatures near or below 10°C during the 1970s cold spells, even though

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such values were never officially recorded.

How Cold Can Antigua and Barbuda Get? The coldest temperature ever recorded at the Airport was 16.1°C, observed in December 1976. Elsewhere, the lowest documented temperature was 11.6°C in Freetown in January 2017, a reminder of how sharply conditions can vary across the island.

Given this context, Destin described the current cold spell as “among the most significant in recent decades, even though official records remain unbroken.”

This chill is not driven by storms or strong winds. Instead, it is the quiet combination of:

- light or calm winds
- an unusually dry atmosphere
- clear nighttime skies, allowing heat to escape rapidly after sunset

Together, these conditions promote enhanced radiative cooling, similar to what occurred during the coldest historical events.

According to the Antigua and Barbuda Meteorological Services, cooler-than-normal nights are expected to persist through the week, even as daytime temperatures remain warm.

- Nighttime temperatures: mainly in the mid to upper teens °C
- Daytime highs: warm and slightly above seasonal norms
- Rainfall: unlikely for most days and nights

This pattern aligns with Antigua and Barbuda’s cool season, which runs from December through March.

Land and Sea: A Shared Caution

The same atmospheric conditions that produce cool nights are also influencing marine activity.

Destin warned that swells heading toward Antigua and Barbuda are peaking again, keeping nearshore sea conditions hazardous, particularly along northern and north-facing coastlines. “Swells heading our way are



peaking again,” he cautioned, “which will keep nearshore conditions hazardous, especially for beachgoers along the northern and north-facing coastlines.”

Improvement is expected, with conditions likely to return to relatively safe levels around New Year’s Day.

Until then, beachgoers, swimmers, and small-craft operators are advised to exercise caution, heed marine advisories, and avoid exposed coastal areas

during periods of strong wave action.

While Antigua and Barbuda is defined by warmth, this near-record chill serves as a reminder that even tropical climates can surprise under the right atmospheric setup.

For now, residents are encouraged to enjoy the crisp evenings, stay informed, and keep an eye on both land and sea as the year winds down.

Bundle up lightly, mind the waves, and welcome the cool season.



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Antigua and Barbuda's Cultural Voices Take the Regional Stage



Ge'Eve Represents Antigua and Barbuda at Queen of Queens 2025

As the year draws to a close, Antigua and Barbuda continues to shine on the regional stage, with young talent and cultural ambassadors representing the nation across pageantry, performance, and music during the holiday season.

Tekyra Richards, Delegate in Miss Caribbean Talented Teen Pageant

Antigua and Barbuda's ECAB Miss Teenage 2025, Tekyra Richards, represents the nation at the Belle Mont Resort Haynes Smith Miss Caribbean Talented Teen Pageant.

Richards competes among nine outstanding young women confirmed for the 2025 edition of the pageant, which celebrates talent, poise, and cultural expression from across the Caribbean. Antigua and Barbuda stands proudly behind its representative on the regional stage.

Desrie Markham Named Guest Artist at Haynes Smith Pageant

Adding further distinction to the event, Desrie Markham, reigning Miss Caribbean Universe 2025, will appear as a Guest Artist at the 43rd edition of the Haynes Smith Miss Caribbean Teen Pageant.

Markham is an accomplished Attorney-at-Law in Antigua and Barbuda, currently serving as Crown Counsel II within the Attorney General's Cham-



Desrie Markham Named Guest Artist at Haynes Smith Pageant

bers. Her professional experience spans Criminal Law, Civil Litigation, Family Law, and International Climate Change Policy and Law, reflecting a strong commitment to justice and public service.

She is deeply invested in youth development and the performing arts. For the past eight years, Markham has been an active member of the National Youth Theatre, mentoring young performers and fostering excellence in speech, stage presence, discipline, and confidence.

A seasoned pageant queen, she also champions the transformative power of theatre through her platform, "*Drama: A Safe Space for the Depressed, Deprived, and Delinquent*," which uses performance as a tool for healing, expression, and empowerment among young people.

Ge'Eve Represents Antigua and Barbuda at Queen of Queens 2025

Antigua and Barbuda's cultural presence will also be felt in Montserrat, where reigning Calypso Monarch Ge'Eve will represent the nation



Tekyra Richards, Delegate in Miss Caribbean Talented Teen Pageant

at Queen of Queens 2025. She is currently the reigning Leeward Island Calypso Monarch, a title she won earlier this year in August 2025. Ge'Eve follows the path of Queen Thalia, who won the Queen of Queens Calypso Competition in 2018.

The regional female calypso competition is scheduled for Tuesday, December 30, at Carnival City in Little Bay, Montserrat, with Ge'Eve performing in position four. The event brings together female calypsonians from across the region, including Montserrat, Antigua and Barbuda, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, St. Maarten, Dominica, Guyana, and St. Kitts and Nevis.

Together, these appearances, from youth pageantry to regional competitions, from stage to courtroom to calypso tent, underscore Antigua and Barbuda's vibrant cultural footprint as its young leaders, artists, and performers continue to represent the nation with excellence throughout the Caribbean.

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Police Blotter



Investigations, Arrests, and Seizures Across Multiple Communities

Ongoing Investigations into the Death of Paradise View Woman

Police are continuing their investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Karen Johannsen of Paradise View, who succumbed to injuries sustained in an incident at Dickenson Bay.

Reports indicate that around 11:00 a.m. on Thursday, December 19, 2025, officers responded to a report of a wounding at Dickenson Bay, where Johannsen was allegedly struck on the back



Karen Johannsen of Paradise View,

of the head with a blunt object by an unknown male.

Police have since been informed that Johannsen was pronounced dead at 10:17 p.m. on December 26, 2025, by a medical doctor at the University of Wisconsin Hospital, where she had been receiving treatment.

A male suspect is currently in police custody and assisting investigators. Police have indicated that inquiries remain ongoing as they continue to gather evidence and determine the full circumstances surrounding the incident.

More Than a Dozen Taken into Custody During Holiday Operations

More than a dozen individuals were arrested and taken into police custody for questioning following a series of coordinated operations across several communities during the Christmas holiday period.

According to a media release from the Royal Police Force of Antigua

and Barbuda, officers executed multiple search warrants, resulting in the seizure of assorted contraband. These included various-caliber rounds of ammunition, mobile phones, a 9mm magazine, a ballistic vest, a laptop computer, quantities of United States and Eastern Caribbean currency, vehicle license plates, and several items of

clothing suspected to be stolen.

Police also recovered a motor vehicle reportedly stolen during a robbery in the Cashew Hill area.

Investigations into these matters are ongoing, and police have indicated that further arrests or charges may follow as inquiries progress.

Man Charged in Connection with Robbery



In a related development

stemming from ongoing investigations, Andy Samuel was taken into police custody and formally charged in connection with a robbery.

Further details regarding the charge have not yet been disclosed because the matter is now before the court.

Police Appeal for Public Assistance

Police are encouraging anyone with information that may assist in these or any other investigations to contact the nearest police station or the Criminal Investiga-

tions Department.

Members of the public are reminded that all individuals are presumed innocent until proven otherwise.

Community Notices

PAGE 9

Antigua Lions Club

The Antigua Lions Club assists in monetary support to individuals in need. The Antigua Lions Club, a well-known, non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to community service in Antigua and Barbuda, recently assisted several individuals in need of

medical assistance. These individuals faced various unfortunate medical circumstances and hardships. Through this initiative, eligible recipients can travel overseas for urgent medical treatment. Amongst the medical cases is a fire victim who received mon-

etary assistance to rebuild her life.

The Lions Club of Antigua is grateful to all of the supporters of our Charity events. "We Serve" is always in giving back to the community and its people.

Old Year's Night Fundraiser - 1st Antigua Girl Guides & Rangers

December 31, 2025 - OLD YEAR'S NIGHT FUNDRAISER Members of the public are invited to join the 1st Antigua Girl Guides & Rangers after Ebenezer's Watch Night Service for our annual Old Year's Night Fundraiser on December 31, 2025, from 10:30 PM at the Ebenezer Methodist Church Grounds. Menu: Goat Water \$20; Chicken & Vegetable Soup \$20; Cream of Pumpkin Soup \$15; Local Drinks \$5. Proceeds in aid of Unit Development



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WITH EPIIUS

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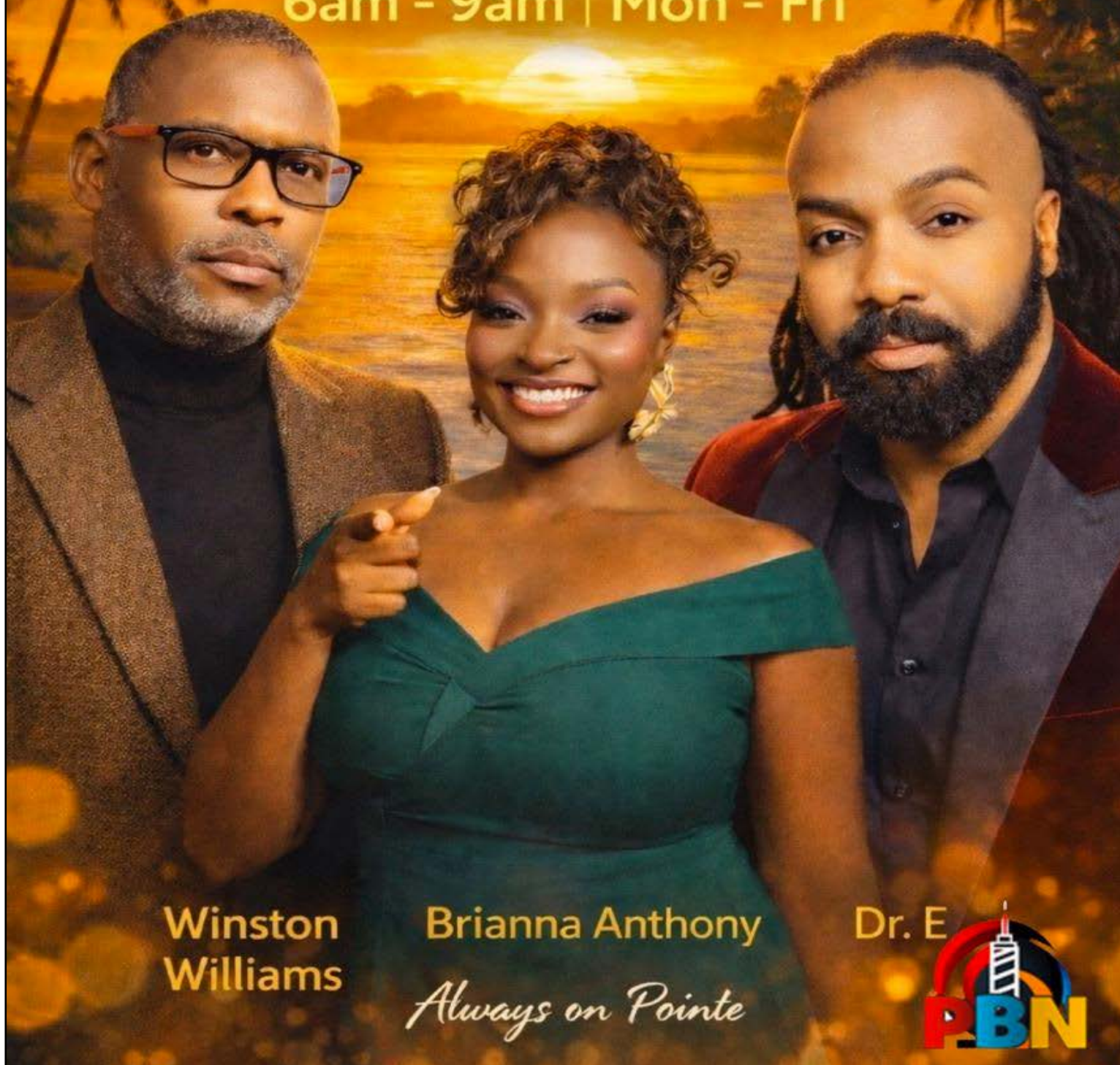
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Regional News

Bolt's Investment Loss Highlights Regional Risks as SSL Probe Deepens

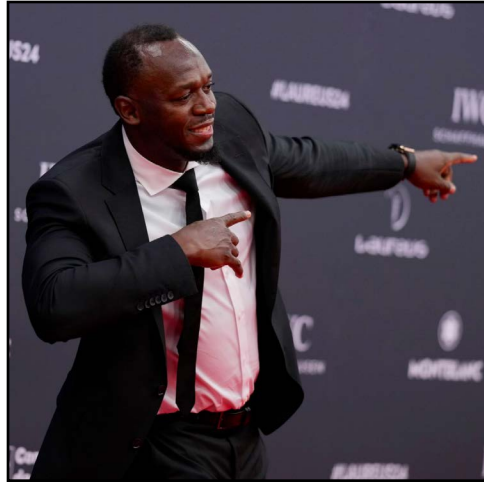
The financial loss suffered by Caribbean sprint icon Usain Bolt remains among the most visible consequences of the ongoing investigation into the collapse of Jamaica-based investment firm Stocks and Securities Limited (SSL), as regional attention continues to focus on investor protection and financial oversight.

Bolt's funds were held through Welljen Limited; a company linked to his retirement planning. That investment is among more than 200 client accounts affected by the alleged fraud at SSL, where investigators estimate that over EC\$50.7 million (J\$3 billion) is unaccounted for. Despite the case's high profile, no recovery timeline has been announced.

In a key development, former SSL chief executive officer Zachary Harding recently submitted himself for questioning by Jamaica's Financial Investigations Division as part of the expanding probe.

Harding has publicly stated that he had no knowledge of missing funds during his tenure and that Bolt's account was not among the matters brought to his attention. Reports indicate that Harding has cooperated with investigators and maintains that he has nothing to hide.

His questioning follows earlier charges against other individuals associated with the firm, including founder Hugh Croskery and former director Sarah Meany, as authorities seek to determine how client funds were handled and whether internal controls failed or were deliberately



Usain Bolt

bypassed.

The SSL investigation is regarded as one of the most serious financial scandals in Jamaica's recent history, due to the scale of the alleged losses and the breadth of affected clients. Bolt's involvement has drawn international attention, but regional observers note that his case underscores a broader vulnerability among investors across the Caribbean.

Financial analysts have noted that Bolt's prominence as an investor does not make the loss exceptional; instead, it underscores how reputational trust in regulated institutions can extend to clients at all levels, including those receiving professional financial advice.

Beyond Jamaica, the SSL case is being closely watched across the Eastern Caribbean and wider CARICOM, particularly as several territories seek to expand or modernise their financial services sectors.

For small states such as Antigua and Barbuda, where maintaining confidence in financial institutions is crit-



Zachary Harding, former SSL CEO

ical to attracting domestic savings, diaspora capital, and international business, the case raises questions about regulatory coordination, custodial safeguards, and cross-border supervision.

Regional regulators have not reported similar breaches elsewhere, but the SSL saga has reinforced the importance of transparent reporting, segregation of client funds, and early detection mechanisms at investment firms.

As court proceedings advance and investigations continue, key questions remain unanswered: how funds entrusted to a regulated financial institution could disappear on such a scale, who had access to the affected accounts, and whether accountability will extend beyond those already charged.

For now, Usain Bolt's financial loss remains the clearest public indicator of the damage caused, even as the broader implications for investor confidence and financial governance across the Caribbean continue to unfold.

Regional News

PAGE 13

At least nine people, including kids, killed in knife attack near Suriname's capital Paramaribo



A knife attack outside Suriname's capital of Paramaribo killed at least nine people, including five children, police said Sunday.

Officials said the victims included four of the attacker's children and neighbours who came to their aid.

A neighbour's child was also killed. Local media reported the victims were located at multiple homes.

The attack took place in Richelieu in the Commewijne district about 25 kilometres (15 miles) east of Paramaribo.

Neighbours said the attack began after the suspect, a 43-year-old male, had an argument over the phone with his wife, with whom he no longer lived.

The neighbours said that after the suspect's wife said she would not pick up the children, but would instead send someone else for them, the suspect attacked his kids with a knife and also went after neighbours in their homes.

In a statement Sunday, Suriname's Police Corps said the suspect attempted to attack police officers who arrived on the scene and he

was injured during his arrest.

He is now recovering in a hospital.

Police said a sixth child and another adult were seriously injured in the attack and were being treated at a hospital in Paramaribo.

On her Facebook page, Surinamese President Jennifer Geerlings-Simons reacted to the news, saying the attacker took the life of his children and his neighbours.

"I wish all the bereaved much strength, resilience, and comfort in this unimaginably difficult time," Geerlings-Simons wrote in Dutch, the nation's official language

Suriname, a former Dutch colony, is the smallest independent nation in South America, with a population of approximately 600,000 people.

It has traditionally had one of the lowest murder rates in the region.

But the murder rate spiked in 2024 to 30 homicides per 100,000 residents, according to data gathered by the think tank Insight Crime. (AP)

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EU signals tougher stance on Caribbean citizenship programmes



The European Commission has signaled a significant hardening of its position toward Caribbean citizenship-by-investment programs (CIPs), warning that the mere existence of such schemes may now justify suspending visa-free travel to the Schengen area.

In its 8th annual Visa Suspension Mechanism report, the Commission shifted its language on CIPs, moving away from concerns about applicants' "genuine links" to host countries and instead characterizing any investor citizenship program operated by visa-free nations as an inherent security risk. "The operation of such programmes constitutes, in itself, a ground for suspending the visa-free status of third countries," the report stated.

The report singled out Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Saint Lucia, describing their programs as posing challenges of "much greater scale" than similar schemes in Europe's im-

mediate neighborhood. Collectively, the five countries have issued more than 100,000 passports through CBI programs, with demand remaining strong—13,113 applications in 2023 and 10,573 in 2024.

Brussels expressed concern over security vetting, noting short processing times and low rejection rates. In 2024, Antigua and Barbuda rejected just 1.7% of applications, Saint Lucia 5.3%, and Dominica 6.5%. While acknowledging reforms such as harmonizing minimum investment thresholds at \$200,000 and strengthening screening procedures, the Commission concluded that risks remain significant.

In formal recommendations, the Commission urged the five Eastern Caribbean nations to ensure adequate vetting "pending the discontinuation" of their programs. The language suggests Brussels is contemplating the eventual elimination of Caribbean CIPs, framing enhanced due diligence as only a

temporary measure.

Under the revised mechanism, failure to comply could trigger suspension of visa-free travel. The approach mirrors measures already applied to Georgia, where the EU announced plans to suspend visa-free travel for holders of diplomatic, service, and official passports by the end of December, with broader restrictions possible if concerns persist.

The Commission emphasized that countries must show measurable progress "without delay" or risk formal suspension procedures.

The report also reiterated that EU candidate countries must abolish investor citizenship schemes entirely. The stance follows an April 2025 European Court of Justice ruling that found Malta in breach of EU law for operating a CIP, establishing that member states cannot offer naturalization based on transactional procedures. (Dominica News Online)

Thailand accuses Cambodia of breaking newly signed ceasefire deal



Thailand's army has accused Cambodia of breaching a newly signed ceasefire deal reached after weeks of deadly clashes that forced nearly one million people from their homes.

In a statement, the Thai army said more than 250 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were detected flying from the Cambodian side on Sunday night.

The ceasefire took effect at noon local time (05:00 GMT) on Saturday. Both sides agreed to freeze the front lines where they are now, ban reinforcements and allow civilians living in border areas to return as soon as possible.

It had been seen as a breakthrough, which came after days of talks between both countries, with diplomatic encouragement from China and the US.

In a statement on Monday, the Royal Thai Army said Cambodia's actions "constitute provocation and a violation of measures aimed at reducing tensions", adding that they were "inconsistent" with the terms of the ceasefire.

It also said it "may need to reconsider" the release of 18 Cambodian soldiers held in Thailand since July.

Thailand would be "obliged to act in accordance... [if] violations of agreements and national sovereignty

continue", it added.

Cambodian Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn described the incident as "a small issue related to flying drones seen by both sides along the border line," according to AFP news agency.

It comes just hours after China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi praised the "hard-won" ceasefire, and US President Donald Trump praised the "rapid and fair conclusion".

The dispute between Thailand and Cambodia is not new, dating back more than a century.

The latest tensions ramped up earlier this year, after a group of Cambodian wom-

en sang patriotic songs in a disputed temple.

A Cambodian soldier was killed in a clash in May. This plunged relations between the countries to their lowest point in more than a decade.

There were five days of intense fighting along the border, which left dozens of soldiers and civilians dead. Thousands more civilians were displaced.

A fragile ceasefire deal was agreed in July and signed in October. It then collapsed earlier this month, when fresh clashes erupted.

Both sides blamed each other for the breakdown of the truce. (BBC)

Trump welcomes Zelenskyy for talks, asserts Russia and Ukraine both want peace

United States President Donald Trump said Sunday he believes both Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin truly want peace, as he welcomed the “brave” Ukrainian leader for talks at his Florida resort.

“The two leaders want it to end,” Trump said at the outset of the meeting at Mar-a-Lago. Before Zelenskyy arrived, Trump spoke with Putin by phone for more than an hour, and planned to speak with him again soon after.

Greeting Zelenskyy at Mar-a-Lago, Trump said of him: “This gentleman has worked very hard, and is very brave, and his people are very brave.” Zelenskyy, by Trump’s side, said he’d discuss issues of territorial concessions with Trump, which have so far been a red line for his country. He said his negotiators and Trump’s “have discussed how to move step by step and bring peace closer” and would continue to do so in the meeting.

Russia intensified its attacks on Ukraine’s capital in the days before the meeting.

Putin’s foreign affairs adviser Yuri Ushakov, said the Trump-Putin call was initiated by the US side, lasted over an hour, and was “friendly, benevolent, and businesslike.” Ushakov said Trump and Putin agreed to speak again “promptly” after Trump’s meeting with Zelenskyy.

But Ushakov added that a “bold, responsible, political decision is needed from Kyiv” on the fiercely contested Donbas region in eastern Ukraine and other matters in dispute for there to be a “complete cessation” of hostilities.

In overnight developments, three guided aerial bombs launched by Russia struck private homes in the eastern city of Sloviansk, according to the head of the local military administration, Vadym Lakh. Three people were injured and one man died, Lakh said in



a post on the Telegram messenger app. The strike came the day after Russia attacked Ukraine’s capital with ballistic missiles and drones on Saturday, killing at least one person and wounding 27, a day before planned talks between the leaders of Ukraine and the United States, Ukrainian authorities said.

Explosions boomed across Kyiv as the attack began in the early morning and continued for hours. Trump said, however, that he still believes Putin is “very serious” about ending the war.

“I believe Ukraine has made some very strong attacks also,” Trump told reporters as Zelenskyy stood by his side. “And I don’t say that negatively. I think, you probably have to. I don’t say that negatively. But I think, he hasn’t told me that, but there have been some explosions in various parts of Russia. It looks to me, like, I don’t know. I don’t think it came from the Congo.”

Trump and Putin will speak again Trump said he’d call Putin after the meeting with Zelenskyy and also reach out to European leaders who he said “have been really great.” He tempered his optimism about ending the conflict, however.

“It’ll either end or it’s going to go on for a long time and millions of additional people will be killed,” Trump said.

Trump and Zelenskyy sitting down face-to-face underscored the apparent

progress made by Trump’s top negotiators in recent weeks as the sides traded draft peace plans and continued to shape a proposal to end the fighting.

Zelenskyy told reporters Friday that the 20-point draft proposal negotiators have discussed is “about 90% ready” — echoing a figure, and the optimism, that U.S. officials conveyed when Trump’s chief negotiators met with Zelenskyy in Berlin earlier this month. During the recent talks, the U.S. agreed to offer certain security guarantees to Ukraine similar to those offered to other members of NATO. The proposal came as Zelenskyy said he was prepared to drop his country’s bid to join the security alliance if Ukraine received NATO-like protection that would be designed to safeguard it against future Russian attacks.

Putin has publicly said he wants all the areas in four key regions that have been captured by his forces, as well as the Crimean Peninsula, illegally annexed in 2014, to be recognized as Russian territory. He also has insisted that Ukraine withdraw from some areas in eastern Ukraine that Moscow’s forces haven’t captured. Kyiv has publicly rejected all those demands.

The Kremlin also wants Ukraine to abandon its bid to join NATO. It warned that it wouldn’t accept the deployment of any troops from members of the military alliance and would view them as a “legitimate target.”

Putin also has said Ukraine must limit the size of its army and give official status to the Russian language, demands he has made from the outset of the conflict.

Trump has been somewhat receptive to Putin’s demands, making the case that the Russian president can be persuaded to end the war if Kyiv agrees to cede Ukrainian land in the Donbas region and if Western powers offer economic incentives to bring Russia back into the global economy. (AP)

Mexico train crash kills 13 and injures almost 100

At least 13 people died and almost 100 were injured in a train derailment in Mexico's south-eastern Oaxaca region, the Mexican navy said.

The train, which was travelling between the Gulf of Mexico and the Pacific Ocean, was carrying 241 passengers and nine crew members.

A total of 98 were injured, of whom 36 were being treated in hospital, the navy said.

The train derailed as it rounded a bend near the town of Nizanda, officials said. Mexico's Attorney General confirmed an investigation was under way.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said five of those injured were in a serious condition.

She said top level officials, including the secretary of the navy, were travelling to the site of the crash.

Photos from the site of the crash showed rescue workers helping passengers alight the train, which had fallen off the rail tracks and partly tilted over the side of a cliff.

The Interoceanic train, which connects the Pacific port of Salina Cruz with Coatzacoalcas on the Gulf Coast, had two locomotives and four passenger cars, the navy said. Mexico's navy operates the country's railway network.

The governor of Oaxaca, Salomón Jara Cruz, expressed "deep regret" over the accident in a statement and said state authorities were coordinating with federal agencies to assist those affected.

The Interoceanic rail link was inaugurated two years ago to boost the region's economy, an initiative spearheaded by former President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Designed to modernise the rail link across the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, the Mexican government has sought to develop the area into a strategic trade corridor, expanding ports, railways and industrial infrastructure.

The train service is also part of a broader push to expand passenger and



freight rail in southern Mexico and the region. (BBC) stimulate economic development in



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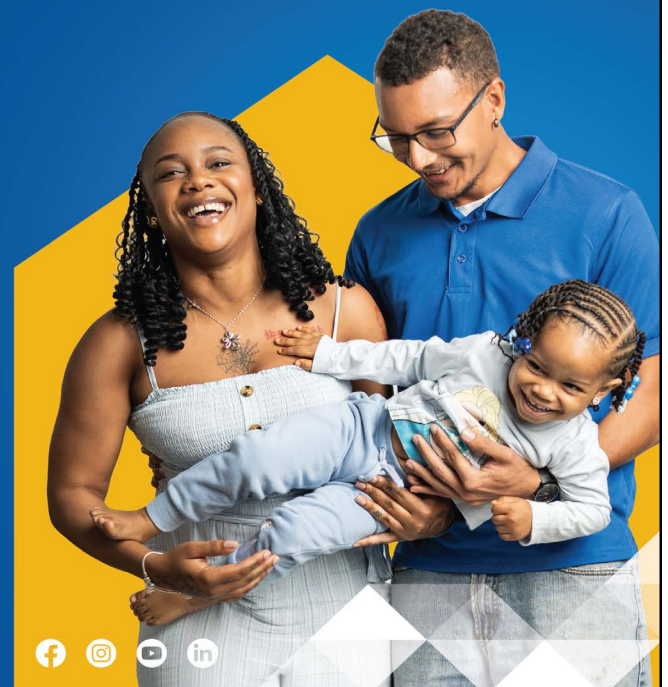


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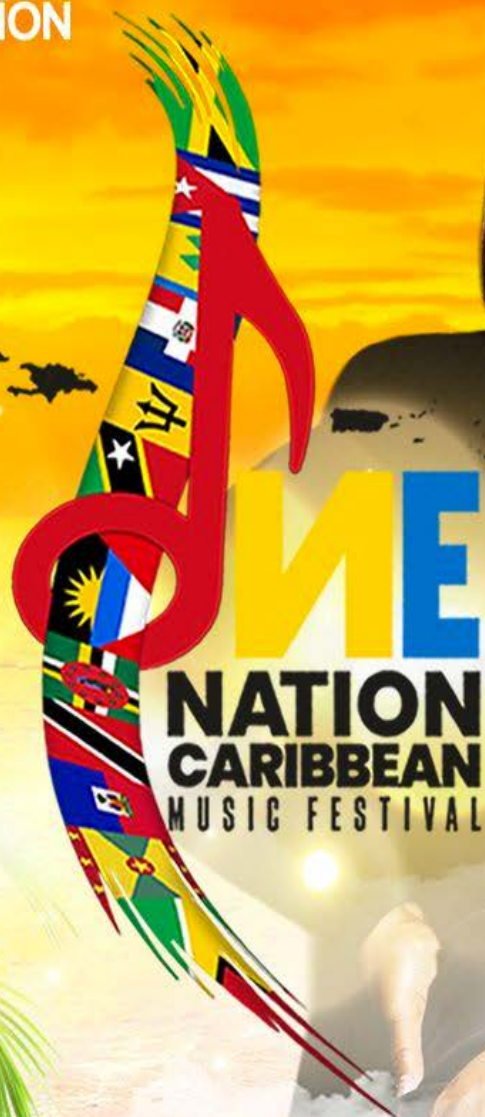
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ANTIGUA CARNIVAL

Leaders All Saints United drop points in Premier Division

Back-to-back defending champions All Saints United maintained their unbeaten run but dropped points for the first time this season in the Antigua and Barbuda Football Association's (ABFA) Premier Division League on Sunday.

After winning all eight previous games, All Saints United was held to a 2-2 draw by Garden Stars FC in the last game of a triple-header at the ABFA Technical Center.

Raheem Deterville scored both goals for All Saints United with conversions in the 53rd and 87th minutes. Kemoi Walsh scored in the 62nd minute, and teammate Nadre Thomas converted a 90th-minute equalizer to salvage the draw for Garden Stars.

All Saints United finished the match with 10 men as Zafique Drew was expelled in the fifth minute of added time after picking up a second caution (yellow card) and was given a red card.

All Saints United remains at the top of the Premier Division standings by advancing to 25 points after recording their first draw in nine matches. Sandals and Inet Jennings Grenades are currently in second place with 23 points from nine matches.

The Garden Stars moved on to 12 points after securing their third draw



A starting XI of the All Saints United football team

in eight matches.

There was also no winner in Sunday's opening match, as the Attacking Saints and John Hughes FC fought to a goal-less draw.

The result allows the Attacking Saints to advance to 10 points after recording their first draw in nine matches. John Hughes FC moves on to four points after salvaging their first draw in nine games.

But the Potters Tigers claimed their third win in nine matches by snatching a 2-1 victory against struggling Sir Molwyn Joseph Jennings United in Sunday's second game.

Keon Greene struck the winner for the Tigers by converting a penalty kick in the 69th minute. Greene's teammate Javorn Benjamin gave the Tigers an early lead with a third-minute conversion.

The lead was short-lived, as Dante Isaac scored an equalizer in the sixth minute to draw Jennings United level before Greene's penalty conversion snatched victory for the Tigers.

The result allows the Potters Tigers to move on to 12 points, while Jennings United remains in the cellar with three points after crashing to their eighth defeat in nine matches.

Pos	Team	Played	Won	Draw	Lost	Goals For	Goals Against	Goal Difference	Points	Form (Last 5)
1	All Saints Utd.	8	7	1	0	34	5	29	22	D W W W W
2	Grenades	8	6	2	0	20	8	12	20	W D W W W
3	Aston Villa	7	5	0	2	20	10	10	15	W L W W L
4	Old Road	7	4	1	2	26	11	15	13	L W W L W
5	Pigotts Bullets	7	4	0	3	15	7	8	12	L W L W W
6	Garden Stars	7	3	2	2	19	16	3	11	D L D W L
7	Potters	8	3	2	3	12	15	-3	11	W D W L W
8	Green City	8	3	1	4	13	18	-5	10	L W L W L
9	Attacking Saints	8	2	1	5	10	19	-9	7	D L L L L
10	Ottos Rangers	8	1	1	6	7	24	-17	4	W L D L L
11	John Hughes	8	1	1	6	6	23	-17	4	D L L L W
12	Jennings	8	1	0	7	4	30	-26	3	

South Africa joins Egypt in Africa Cup knockout stage



Egypt's Mohamed Salah, center, smiles as he sits on the bench ahead of the Africa Cup of Nations group B soccer match between Angola and Egypt in Agadir, Morocco, Monday, Dec. 29, 2025. (AP)

RABAT, Morocco (AP) — Oswin Appollis fired South Africa into the last 16 of the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday with a hard-fought 3-2 win over Zimbabwe, while Egypt star Mohamed Salah got a rest.

The Bafana Bafana progressed in second place in Group B, behind already-qualified Egypt, which drew 0-0 with Angola in Agadir. Both final group games were played at the same time.

With his team already through, Egypt coach Hossam Hassan rested his regulars, including Salah, Omar Marmoush, and Trézéguet. They're set to return for the Pharaohs' first knockout game, also in Agadir, against a third-place finisher from Groups A, C or D on Jan. 5.

South Africa needed a win in Mar-

rakech to be sure of progress without relying on a favour from Egypt. But Zimbabwe twice came from behind and pushed for an equalizer late on.

Tshepang Moremi gave South Africa an early lead, thanks to a deflection from Zimbabwe defender Divine Lunga taking it over the helpless goalkeeper.

Tawanda Maswanhise replied in the 19th with a brilliant individual goal, leaving defenders in his wake before firing the ball into the bottom corner.

Lyle Foster headed South Africa's second early in the second half after a mix-up between Lunga and goalkeeper Washington Arubi.

An own-goal from Aubrey Modiba drew the Warriors level again in the 73rd to set up an exciting finale.

But they weren't expecting Marvelous Nakamba to concede a penalty for handball instead of heading it, and Appollis duly converted the penalty in the 82nd.

The South Africans are waiting on results in Group F as they will play the second-placed finisher from that group — Ivory Coast, Cameroon or Mozambique — on Sunday.

Later Sunday, host nation Morocco will tackle Zambia in Group A, and Mali will meet the Comoros.

The Morocco players were cheered when they took their first walk out on the field before the game. Team captain Achraf Hakimi appealed for supporters to stop whistling the team on Sunday. He's expected to play after recovering from an ankle injury.

Perreira claims CWI to stage regional four-day in Antigua

Veteran cricket commentator Joseph “Reds” Perreira says Cricket West Indies (CWI) is set to stage the upcoming regional four-day first-class season in a single territory, following last season’s multi-nation format.

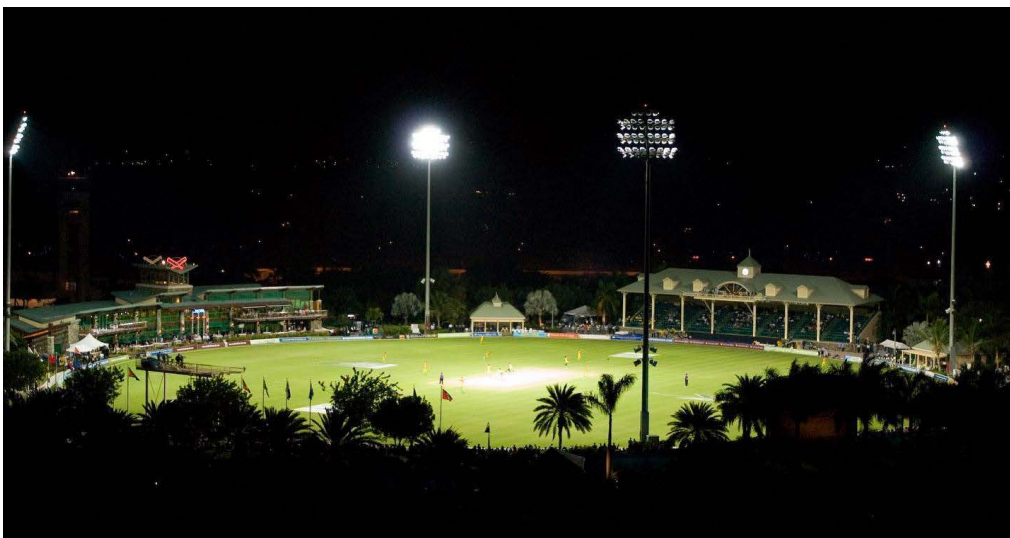
Perreira says all indications point to Antigua and Barbuda hosting the entire tournament during April, with the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium (SVRS), the Antigua Recreation Ground (ARG), and the Coolidge Cricket Ground (CCG) identified as the primary venues.

According to Perreira, condensing the tournament into one host nation is a practical cost-saving measure that allows CWI to stage the competition without placing additional strain on its budget.

By basing all teams in Antigua and Barbuda, CWI is expected to significantly reduce expenditure related to inter-island flights and long-term lodging, while also simplifying logistical planning for teams, officials, and broadcasters.

Perreira welcomed the move, describing it as a sensible and necessary step given the current economic climate.

The restructured regional four-day tournament is a result of a series of immediate and long-term reforms announced by Cricket West Indies (CWI) to strengthen West Indies cricket following an emergency meeting of



An aerial view of the Coolidge Cricket Ground, home of Cricket West Indies, in Antigua. (File photo)

the Cricket Strategy and Officiating Committee held at the Hyatt Regency Trinidad on August 10 and 11, 2025.

Members of the Cricket Strategy & Officiating Committee (CSOC), West Indies greats, past players and current players – including current captains Roston Chase and Shai Hope – the Men’s Team Management Unit, and CWI Executives, met on Sunday, August 10, and Monday, August 11, to examine a broad range of interrelated topics affecting team performance.

The Committee highlighted ten (10) critical challenges affecting the state of West Indies cricket, including limited ICC revenue share and financial constraints.

During CWI’s Quarterly Media Brief-

ing in October, it was announced that changes would be made to this year’s tournament, against the backdrop of a challenging financial period for the organization.

The current state of Cricket West Indies finances already led to a restructured format for the 2025 CG United Super50 Cup, the marquee 50-over regional tournament, which took place in Trinidad from Wednesday, November 19, to Saturday, November 29.

The recent 2025 Super50 Cup had a reduction in the traditional 31-match, eight-team layout to an abbreviated six-team round-robin structure, with the top two teams qualifying directly for the final. The 2025 regional Super50 Cup was won by the Barbados Pride.




Festivals Greetings

From the Antigua Barbuda Festivals Commission!

As we celebrate the spirit of Christmas and welcome a bright New Year, we extend heartfelt gratitude for your continued support. We look forward to creating even more moments of joy, creativity, and national pride together.

Cheers to new beginnings, strengthened partnerships, and an inspiring 2026 ahead.

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Anthony Joshua stable after fatal car crash in Nigeria

LAGOS (Reuters) - British former world heavyweight boxing champion Anthony Joshua was involved in a car accident in Nigeria's Ogun State that killed two people, local police said on Monday.

Joshua, 36, sustained minor injuries when his vehicle collided with another car, Ogun State Police Command said, adding that he had been taken to hospital and that they were investigating the cause of the accident.

Nigeria's Federal Road Safety Corps said five men had been involved in the accident on the Lagos-Ibadan Expressway. Joshua suffered minor injuries, two people lost their lives and two walked away unhurt, the FRSC said.

Officials have not said who was driving the car carrying Joshua, and investigations are ongoing.

The Ogun State Government later said that Joshua and another passenger were evacuated to a specialised medical facility in Lagos, where doctors confirmed both were stable and did not require emergency intervention.

Joshua has since spoken with his family, the state-



Anthony Joshua stands on stage during a face-off against Jake Paul at a news conference promoting their upcoming heavyweight boxing match in Miami Beach, Florida, on Wednesday, Dec. 17, 2025. (AP)

ment posted on X added. President Bola Tinubu expressed sympathy to Joshua and the families of the victims, calling the incident a "tragic accident."

The FRSC said preliminary findings suggest the vehicle carrying Joshua was likely speeding when it lost control during an overtaking manoeuvre and crashed into a stationary truck parked by the roadside.

"The primary causes of the crash being excessive speed and wrongful overtaking constitute serious traffic vi-

olations and remain among the leading causes of fatal road crashes on Nigerian highways," the FRSC said on X.

Joshua could not immediately be reached for comment. His promoter, Matchroom Boxing, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Joshua, who is the son of British-Nigerian parents, attended a boarding school in Ikenne, 53 miles from where the crash happened, before returning to Britain at age 12.

The accident occurred just over a week after Joshua knocked out American social media star Jake Paul in the sixth round of a bout in Miami.

Paul expressed his condolences in a X post on Monday, saying he was "praying for the lost lives, AJ and anyone impacted by today's unfortunate accident."

Joshua was returning to the ring after a 15-month layoff. He is expected to fight long-time rival and fellow Briton Tyson Fury in 2026.



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Under-16 Junior Division champion Alberto Queipo Delgado, center, is flanked by Sir Rodney Williams, right, and Dr. Hannibal M. Fleming.



The president of the Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation, Dr. Hannibal M. Fleming, left, looks on as Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda Dr. Sir Rodney Williams, right, congratulates Ateila Bobb, center, for winning the Best Female Performance Award.

Con't from page 24

ing, and resilience, particularly among young people.

The president of the Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation, Dr. Hannibal M. Fleming, formally announced the tournament results, after which medals, trophies, book prizes, and gifts were presented to the winners.

The Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation extends sincere appreciation to its sponsors and partners, whose support made the tournament possible.

They include Towing & Marine Services, Catamaran Hotel (Venue Sponsor), Nova Wellness, Medical Outfitters Inc., Benjamin Bridge, and ARGO Critical Solutions.

Special thanks are also extended to the ABCF members whose dedication ensured the success of the event. Among them are Event Organizer Christine Joseph, Chief Arbiter Chester Grant, Past President Seymore Smith, and ABCF Press & Media Officer Julian Piper.

The ABCF Winter Chess Tournament marked a strong close to the Federation's competitive 2025 calendar and reaffirmed its mission to develop chess across all levels in Antigua and Barbuda.

The federation is looking forward with optimism to continued growth, expanded youth participation, and increased regional and international engagement in the year ahead.

ABCF WINTER CHESS TOURNAMENT 2025 – FINAL RESULTS

Falmouth Harbour | December 28, 2025

RATED SECTION

- *Gold* Dr. Guillermo Alberto Queipo Caballero
- *Silver* Abner Farquhar
- *Bronze* Victor Ince

UNRATED SECTION

- *Gold* Alberto Queipo Delgado
- *Silver* Lucas Vanninen
- *Bronze* Ariel David Joseph Tamayo

UNDER-16 JUNIOR DIVISION

- *Gold* Alberto Queipo Delgado
- *Silver* Lucas Vanninen
- *Bronze* Ariel David Joseph Tamayo

SPECIAL AWARDS

Most Improved Player – Jaheim Sebro
 Best Female Performance – Ateila Bobb
 Best Junior (Non-Podium) – Lucas Vanninen
 Sportsmanship & Fair Play – Sydiann Challender

Champions crowned at ABCF Winter Chess Tournament



Winner of the Rated Section, Dr. Guillermo Alberto Queipo Caballero, center, accepts an award from Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda Dr. Sir Rodney Williams, right, while the president of the Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation, Dr. Hannibal M. Fleming, left, looks on.

Second-place winner in the Rated Section Abner Farquhar, center, accepts an award from Governor General of Antigua and Barbuda Dr. Sir Rodney Williams, right, while the president of the Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation, Dr. Hannibal M. Fleming, left, looks on.

Multiple winners were crowned champions during the 2025 Winter Chess Tournament, which was successfully hosted by the Antigua and Barbuda Chess Federation (ABCF) at the Catamaran Hotel in Falmouth Harbour on Sunday.

Dr. Guillermo Alberto Queipo Caballero won the Rated Section, with Abner Farquhar copping second place and Victor Ince finishing in third place.

The Unrated Section was captured by Alberto Queipo Delgado ahead of Lucas Vanninen in the runner-up position and Ariel David Joseph Tamayo in third place.

Alberto Queipo Delgado was crowned champion of the Under-16 Junior Division. Lucas Vanninen took second place, and Ariel David Joseph Tamayo claimed third place.

In recognition of excellence beyond podium finishes, the federation presented four Special Recognition Awards to celebrate growth, integrity,

and positive contribution to the sport.

Jaheim Sebro bagged the award for the Most Improved Player; Ateila Bobb clinched the award for the Best Female Performance; Lucas Vanninen captured the Best Junior Performance (Non-Podium) Award; and Sydiann Challenger won the Sportsmanship and Fair Play Award.

The tournament showcased a full day of competitive excellence, national pride, and community engagement.

Set in the scenic restaurant hall overlooking Falmouth Harbour and the crystal-blue Caribbean Sea, the tournament unfolded under clear skies and bright sunshine, providing an ideal atmosphere for focused competition and celebration.

The picturesque coastal setting underscored the growing stature of chess as a respected sport and educational discipline in Antigua and Barbuda.

Players competed across two sections, Rated and Unrated, representing

a diverse mix of experienced competitors and emerging talent. After the first three rounds were completed, the players took a break for refreshments.

During the lunch interval, the federation was honoured by the arrival of His Excellency the Governor General, Dr. Sir Rodney Williams, accompanied by Her Excellency Lady Sandra Williams and their son, who attended as special guests of honour.

Their presence highlighted the national significance of chess as a vehicle for discipline, critical thinking, and youth development.

The tournament continued with three additional rounds, culminating in final rankings that determined the champions and award recipients.

At the conclusion of play, His Excellency the Governor General delivered uplifting and motivational closing remarks, emphasizing the role of chess in shaping character, strategic think-

Con't on page 23