

Friday

February 20, 2026

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Aruba's cultural and literary development



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## How Aruban beaches came to be!



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## The "Four-Minute City": McKinney's historic surge in cardiac survival

In just two years, McKinney, Texas, has transformed from a city with average cardiac outcomes into a national leader in life-saving emergency response. By February 2026, McKinney's out-of-hospital cardiac arrest (OHCA) survival rate skyrocketed from 10% to 47%, nearly matching Seattle's world-leading 50% survival rate and far exceeding the U.S. national average of approximately 30%.

This "comeback" is the result of a radical "Chain of Survival" strategy that bridges the gap between a call to emergency services and the arrival of paramedics.

### Beating the Clock: The Four-Minute Initiative

The core of McKinney's success is the "4-Minute City" model. Research shows that for every minute a cardiac arrest victim goes without chest compressions or a shock, their chance of survival drops by 10%. To beat this clock, the city implemented three key pillars:



Mike Ferrari, a Georgia resident who survived a cardiac arrest, presents the American Heart Association Heartsaver Hero award to members of the Indianapolis International Airport fire department and Decatur Township Fire Department.

**Mobile AED Deployment:** The McKinney Police Department (MPD) partnered with the fire department to equip all patrol, traffic, and neighborhood police vehicles with smart automated external defibrillators (AEDs). Because officers are often already on the

road, their "go-time" is seconds, frequently allowing them to arrive and deliver a shock before fire engines.

**Neighborhood Heroes**  
The city is expanding its AED network to citizens through the Neighborhood Heroes campaign. This pro-

gram places cellular-connected AEDs in the hands of trained residents, with the goal of having a device within four minutes of any location in the city. **The GoodSAM App:** Launched in late 2024, the GoodSAM app uses GPS technology to alert CPR-

trained volunteers within a few hundred yards of a cardiac emergency. This allows bystanders to begin life-saving interventions before sirens are even heard.

### Systemic Efficiency and Rapid Dispatch

Beyond community involvement, McKinney overhauled its internal logistics. The city implemented the "Quick Drop" system, which streamlined how dispatchers classify cardiac distress calls. This change helped reduce average cardiac arrest dispatch times from roughly two minutes to under 60 seconds.

### Local Impact and Recognition

The results of this cultural shift are tangible. In the past year alone, nine McKinney residents were successfully revived due to these new protocols. Notably, the American Heart Association selected McKinney's model to lead its national Heart Health Month campaign in February 2026. □

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## The Great Pacific Rebound: California's groundfish return to abundance

For decades, the deep waters off the California coast told a story of depletion. By the late 1990s, the "groundfish" fishery—a diverse group of over 90 species including rockfish, sole, and sablefish—was in a state of collapse. Today, that narrative has shifted into what experts call the "comeback of the century," with nearly all managed stocks successfully rebuilt following some of the most stringent fishing bans in American history. □



Nearly 600 pounds of shrimp from Acy Cooper's shrimp trawler are cleaned and weighed at a seafood dealer following a 12-hour plus overnight shift of shrimping on August 27, 2019.

## The Invisible Victory: Lead pollution plummets to historic lows in the U.S.

For most of the 20th century, lead was a silent but ubiquitous presence in American life—streaming from tailpipes, flaking off walls, and leaching through water pipes. Today, that narrative has fundamentally shifted. New data from February 2026 reveals that lead exposure in the United States has plummeted by nearly 100-fold since its peak in the 1960s, marking one of the most successful public health interventions in modern history.

A landmark study analyzing hair samples dating back to 1916 found that contemporary lead levels are now less than one part per million, compared to over 100 parts per million during the era of leaded gasoline.

### The "Chain of Success" behind the Decline

This dramatic reduction is not the result of a single policy but a sustained, multi-decade regulatory offensive led by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA):

The End of Leaded Gas: The phase-out of leaded gasoline, completed in 1996, triggered a 98% decrease



Steam and smoke rise from stacks in "Chemical Valley", on April 1, 2025. In airborne lead levels between 1980 and 2014.

Residential Lead Bans: The 1978 federal ban on lead-based paint significantly reduced the primary source of childhood ingestion in the home.

Modernizing the Grid: The Lead and Copper Rule Improvements (LCRI), finalized in October 2024, now mandates the complete replacement of all lead service lines across the coun-

### Impact on Public Health

The biological evidence of this decline is stark. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), average blood lead levels (BLLs) in the U.S. population dropped by over 93% between 1976 and 2016.

National Institutes of Health (NIH) | (.gov) +2

Sharper Thresholds: In re-

sponse to the success and new science showing no "safe" level of lead, the CDC recently lowered its blood lead reference value (BLRV) from 5 µg/dL to 3.5 µg/dL to trigger earlier medical intervention.

Economic Gains: The EPA estimates that the ongoing removal of lead pipes will prevent up to 200,000 lost IQ points in children and reduce premature deaths from heart disease by 1,500

cases annually.

### The Final 1%: Legacy Challenges

Despite the "100-fold" victory, experts warn that the remaining "legacy lead" still poses risks to specific populations.

Infrastructure Gaps: An estimated 9.2 million lead service lines still carry drinking water to homes and schools.

Localized Spikes: Recent data from February 2025 showed that extreme events, such as the Los Angeles urban fires, can temporarily remobilize legacy lead dust into the air at levels 110 times higher than average.

Inequity: Lead concentrations remain markedly higher in racially segregated and low-income communities where older housing is more prevalent.

The Biden-Harris administration's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law has committed \$15 billion specifically to accelerate the removal of these remaining lead pipes, aiming to close the gap on the "final 1%" of exposure by 2034. □

## The "Chase" for Compassion: Twin Cities tow truck driver reunites families with abandoned cars

In the wake of a massive immigration enforcement surge in Minnesota, a small towing company has become an unlikely beacon of hope.

Juan Leon, owner of Leo's Towing, has spent the last several months working around the clock to recover and return hundreds of vehicles left abandoned on the streets of Minneapolis and St. Paul following arrests by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

### A Rapid Response to a Community Crisis

The initiative began in late December 2025, when Leon noticed a recurring pattern of vehicles left running or parked haphazardly in traffic after their drivers



A vehicle involved in a shooting by an ICE agent during federal law enforcement operations is towed away on January 07, 2026 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

were taken into custody. For many families, these cars represent their most valuable asset and only means of transportation; without intervention, they are typically impounded, incurring fees of \$228 or more plus daily storage

costs that many cannot afford.

Leon and his brother-in-law, Gonzalo Villegas, stepped in to bridge this gap:

The Operation: The team uses "chase" cars to scout for abandoned vehicles reported by community ob-

servers or the families themselves.

The Reach: Since late December, Leo's Towing has returned an estimated 250 vehicles.

The Cost: This service is provided entirely free of charge to the affected families.

### Emotional Stakes and Personal Risks

The work is as dangerous as it is emotional. Leon has reported receiving death threats and being "doxxed" (having his personal information leaked online) as his efforts gained national attention. Despite the threats, the crew continues their 24/7 mission, fueled by the relief they see during drop-offs. "All I can do is give them a hug and tell them hopefully things

will get better," Villegas told CBS Minnesota.

### A Community-Funded Mission

While a single tow and its associated insurance costs can be prohibitively expensive, Leon has been able to sustain the operation through a GoFundMe campaign that has raised over \$40,000 from donors across the country. This funding allows the business to prioritize these "mercy tows" over regular commercial calls.

The team often posts pictures of recovered vehicles on the Leo's Tow Facebook page to help relatives identify missing cars, as they—like ICE—are locked out of official state license plate databases. □

# Horror comics boom in our age of anxiety

Paris, France

Horror sells right now. Having swept the film, television and video game industries, it is also a winning formula in the world of comics. Just ask James Tynion IV.

The New York-based writer sold around five million copies of his "Something is Killing the Children" series, which first appeared in 2019.

It follows Erica Slaughter, a mysterious woman with a stuffed octopus, who can see the invisible monsters that have been murdering children in a small American town.

Subsequent works "The House on the Lake" or "The Department of Truth" have tackled human survival and conspiracy theories, helping turn Tynion into one of the top-selling independent American comics creators across all genres.

"Horror allows you to talk about what you're afraid about in society, and what you're afraid about in yourself, and you get to dial it up to all of these extremes," he told AFP in an interview in Paris.

According to the affable 38-year-old, ultra-violent or supernatural stories -- from Netflix's "Stranger

Things" to gaming favourite "Resident Evil" -- work as a sort of pressure valve.

But they also hold up a reassuring mirror, helping



U.S. comics artist James Tynion IV poses with accessories from his new comic book during a photo session in Paris on February 3, 2026.

make real-life fears seem somehow less frightening. "The benefit of the horror genre is that there are stories in which there are actual monsters. The things that are wrong in society are crystallised into these personas that then you get to see wreak havoc or get their comeuppance," he said.

"There's something very cathartic in engaging in horror. It's been like this in previous decades: when the world is more frightening, horror as a genre does better," he added.

The popularity of horror and crime comics in the post-war 1950s and out-

rage from politicians led to American publishers agreeing to the Comics Code Authority, which effectively banned the genre until the 1970s and 80s.

#### 'Rules out the window'

Societal problems are very much on Tynion's mind in his latest book, "Exquisite Corpses", which has sold 500,000 copies since its release in the United States last year. The final chapter will be published in the United States in May, while the first French-language versions appeared earlier this month.

Created with Canadian visual artist Michael Walsh, the series imagines a dys-

topian world in which the 13 richest families in America organise a fight-to-the-death each year in a different town to decide who gets to rule the country.

Instead of battling personally, they each choose a fighter for a tournament which sees their mass murderers and psychopaths unleashed into the terrified local population. Tyranny, oligarchy and a breakdown in law and order Tynion admits that contemporary America was very much on his mind when he, Walsh and a group of four other writers sat down to map out the initial 13-book series.

"I mean, it's hard for it not to be top of mind right now," he said, adding that most of his work was rooted in modern political and societal issues.

"Exquisite Corpses" is specifically about "what happens when the rules go out the window and you have immense bullies and people who are just in it for themselves. What happens over and over again is that people get caught in the crossfire," he said.

As well as drawing inspiration from series such as "The Hunger Games" or "Squid Game", it is rendered in bright and cold colours that give it a feel of the hit shooter video game "Fortnite".

"I think a lot of American horror comics are quite dreary in terms of their aesthetic," Walsh said.

#### Multi-media

Tynion previously worked at DC Comics, which owns the Batman and Superman superhero franchises that are the bedrock of the American comics industry, alongside Marvel characters such as Spider-Man and Captain America. The success of Tynion's Tiny Onion studio has seen film and TV companies beat a path to his door, with "Something is Killing the Children" being developed by US horror film specialist Blumhouse. □

## Bad Bunny to star in movie about Puerto Rico

Los Angeles, United States

Fresh from his success at the Grammys and a triumphant Super Bowl halftime show, Puerto Rican megastar Bad Bunny is set to take the lead role in an all-star film, producers announced Wednesday.

"Porto Rico," which will be directed by Grammy-winning rapper Rene "Residente" Perez Joglar, is described as a cross between a Caribbean western and a historical drama about the island both men call home.

The film will also fea-



Puerto Rican rapper Bad Bunny performs during his "Debitar mas fotos" world tour at the MAS Monumental Stadium in Buenos Aires on February 13, 2026.

ture stars such as Viggo Mortensen, Javier Bardem, and Edward Norton, and will be produced by Acad-

emy Award winner Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu.

"Porto Rico" tells the story of Jose Maldonado Roman, known as "Aguila Blanca" (White Eagle), a revolutionary who fought against colonialism in the late 19th century.

"I have dreamed of making a film about my country since I was a child," said Perez Joglar.

"Puerto Rico's true history has always been surrounded by controversy."

"This film is a reaffirmation of who we are -- told with the intensity and honesty

that our history deserves." The film fuses "historical scope with a visceral, lyrical approach and a gripping narrative inspired by true events," a statement added. The rapper and founder of Calle 13 posted a carousel of historical photos and thanked the team accompanying him on the film project, which will center on Bad Bunny.

The 31-year-old reggaeton artist is on an unstoppable streak. □

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## The "Noah's Ark" of the Desert: Inside the Intihuasi Seed Vault after the big freeze

Deep in the heart of Chile's Atacama Desert—the driest place on Earth—a revolution in botanical conservation is taking place.

As of February 2026, the Intihuasi Seed Bank has emerged as a global "mothership" for biodiversity, successfully transitioning its entire collection into a high-tech "deep freeze" designed to outlast climate change and natural disasters.

Often referred to as Chile's "Noah's Ark," the facility has recently completed a massive technical upgrade to its storage systems. The



A colorful proliferation of flowers blankets the Atacama Desert near Copiapo, Chile, on October 3, 2025

Climate-Controlled Vault: Seeds are now stored in a walk-in freezer maintained at a constant -4 degrees Fahrenheit (-20°C) with exactly 15% humidity. Earth-

quake-Proof Infrastructure: Nestled into a remote hillside, the vault features reinforced concrete walls built to withstand the intense seismic activity com-

mon to the Andes region. Packaging Strategy: Moving away from traditional glass, technicians now use multi-layered aluminum foil pouches and plastic beakers to prevent breakage during tremors.

**What's Inside the Vault?**  
The Atacama vault is more than just a local garden; it is a strategic reserve for one of the most biodiverse regions on the planet. Endemic Rarity: The facility currently houses approximately 28% of Chile's native plant species, with a goal to preserve 50% by 2035. This includes 4,655

plant species, nearly half of which (46%) are found nowhere else on Earth. Agricultural Staples: Beyond wild flora, the vault safeguards critical food resources like unique strains of maize, beans, and cereal crops that are essential to Chile's role as a major global food exporter. The "Extinct" Comeback: The vault is also a site of active restoration. Researchers recently germinated seeds of the *Diplostephium pauposanum*, a flower once thought to be extinct, for a pilot reintroduction program in the Antofagasta region.□

## Olympics rev up Milan's renewal but locals fear price to pay

### Milan, Italy

The Winter Olympics are expected to accelerate Milan's transformation into a vibrant international metropolis -- but many residents fear the effect will see them priced out.

As one of several sites hosting the Milan-Cortina Games, the northern Italian city has benefited from major investments, with the Santagiulia ice hockey arena one example. Built on a vacant lot in the southeast suburbs, near a wooded area known for crack cocaine dealing, the arena will be turned into a concert venue after the Games, with hopes that it will regenerate the rundown area. But the Olympic spirit is hard to find in much of Milan, where rents have soared in the past few years as skyscrapers and top restaurants multiply.

Thousands of people protested the opening of the February 6-22 Games, many railing against the social impact, bearing ban-



People stroll in the Vittorio Emanuele II gallery ahead of the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Games Milan, Italy, on January 26, 2026.

ners saying "Eat the rich, not the city". "Milan is becoming very attractive for tourists, for the rich -- but what will be left?" Giovanni Gaiani, 69, told AFP at the demonstration.

### Rising rents

Milan has long been the economic capital of Italy and is used to holding international events, from fashion weeks to design fairs and football matches by its two top-flight clubs, AC Milan and Inter Milan. Employment possibilities

are greater and wages generally higher than elsewhere in Italy, and the city has long attracted workers from across the country, especially the poorer south. But wages in Milan grew just 10 percent between 2015 and 2023, while rents jumped 45 percent in the same period, according to the Affordable Housing Observatory. They have stabilised in recent months, but many middle-class families have been pushed far from the city centre, and students struggle to find af-

fordable accommodation. "Even on the outskirts it's hard to find something... rents and sale prices have reached crazy levels," said Giorgio Saccone, a 31-year-old baker. Milan has also seen a huge influx of tourists and capital in recent years, boosted by the 2015 World Expo. Visitor numbers have doubled over the past decade, to 9.7 million in 2025, according to city authorities. The Expo attracted expatriates who "want a dynamic life, close to fashion and

design", said Diletta Giorgio Spinola, head of residential offerings in Italy for Sotheby's. Changes to the British tax regime have also pushed some wealthy individuals to leave the UK and "choose between Italy and Dubai", both of which offer tax advantages and international schools, she told AFP. "We're seeing many families, single people, or couples whose children have left home, coming from the tech, banking and finance sectors" and typically buying properties worth five to 10 million euros (\$6-12 million), she said. □

### Disneyland?

In Milan's city centre, Via Montenapoleone -- labelled the street with the world's most expensive shop rents in 2024 -- has just welcomed a huge Fendi store.

High-end restaurant openings are also multiplying, including the recent arrival of Turkish chef and influencer "Salt Bae" and his 285 euro steaks.□

## Shell-ebrity Status: Loganair welcomes "Crush" the Turtle as a first-class passenger

In a rare move for commercial aviation, Loganair officially welcomed a high-profile, four-legged passenger into its passenger cabin this February. Crush, a juvenile endangered loggerhead turtle, was granted "VIP" status for a specialized flight from the Island of Jersey to Southampton to continue her life-saving rehabilitation.

### A Storm-Tossed Journey

Crush's journey began in January 2026, when she was discovered washed up on a Jersey beach following the devastating Storm Goretti. Disoriented



Environmental agents release baby Loggerhead sea turtles into the sea at Puerto Banus beach in Marbella on July 23, 2024. "cold stunning"—a dangerous condition where prolonged exposure to frigid waters causes a turtle's heart rate and metabolism

to plummet.

Local veterinarians at New Era Veterinary Hospital provided round-the-clock emergency care, even using a household bath to stabilize her temperature. However, once stabilized, Crush needed the specialized facilities of the Sea Life Centre in Weymouth to complete her recovery.

### Why the Cabin?

Transporting a cold-stunned turtle involves more than just a standard pet carrier. Logistical experts and vets determined that a ferry crossing would be too stressful for the vul-

nerable reptile.

**Temperature Control:** Maintaining a stable environment above 19°C (66°F) was critical for her survival.

**Monitoring:** Continuous observation by clinical director Peter Haworth was required throughout the transit.

**Skin Protection:** To prevent dehydration during the flight, Crush was coated in Vaseline to protect her skin and eyes.

Given these unique needs, Loganair received special dispensation to allow Crush to travel directly in the passenger cabin rather than the cargo hold. □

## Crowds flock to Istanbul's Museum of Innocence before TV adaptation

### Istanbul, Turkey

On a cobbled street in Cukurcuma, a district on Istanbul's European side known for its antiques shops, the story penned by Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk in his bestselling novel "The Museum of Innocence" has been brought to life.

Inside a red-painted house, visitors are confronted by a wall of 4,213 cigarette butts, many of them lipstick-stained, others angrily stubbed out, all obsessively kept by the book's protagonist, Kemal Basmaci.

Just days before Friday's launch of a serialised Netflix adaptation of the novel, hundreds of curious visitors have come to the museum, squeezing past one another on the narrow wooden stairs up to Basmaci's attic room.

At the entrance, Umit, who runs the museum and declined to give his surname, said there had been about 500 visitors per day since Netflix began running trailers for the nine-part series, compared to 200 on a normal day.

"And that will likely double after it comes out," he predicted.

Set in the 1970s, the series features a young man from a wealthy Istanbul fam-



A crowd of visitors inside The Museum of Innocence in Istanbul on February 10, 2026.

ily who is devastated by the end of his relationship with Fusun, a distant cousin from a working-class background.

The break-up sends him on an obsessive mission to collect anything that is hers. Hence the wall of cigarette butts mounted on pins, each painstakingly labelled by circumstance, collected over an eight-year period starting from 1976.

There are hundreds more items on display, from bits of jewellery to items of clothing, photos, cinema tickets and bottles of Meltem soda, which was popular in the 1970s -- a huge collection of mundane mementoes passionately collected

to fill the void left by Fusun's absence.

They are laid out in 83 display cases, the same number of chapters in the book. Nobel literature prize-winner Pamuk, who opened the museum in 2012, four years after the novel was published, has admitted to being a similarly compulsive collector.

### Truth in it'

The novel emerged when he began writing about the objects he had saved, everything from family keepsakes to trinkets picked up at the bazaars, which gradually brought his characters to life.

The museum showcases objects that make up the

story, but the story also developed as he acquired new objects, the museum website says.

And the whole novel opens a unique window onto a decade of Istanbul history. Songul Tekin, 28, a visitor who loved the book, said she is convinced some of it really happened and came to the museum to "see it in real life".

"It's told in real depth. There has to be some truth in it because otherwise you would never have so many objects and so much detail," she told AFP.

She arrived with a friend and her copy of the novel -- a gesture which lets visitors enter for free, thanks to

a ticket on page 485 of the Turkish version of the book. Also visiting was Aydin Deniz Yuce, a psychologist in his 30s who is a huge fan of Pamuk's works.

Although "The Museum of Innocence" was not his "favourite", he said he was really keen to see the Netflix series and is convinced the "handsomeness" of the main actor, Selahattin Pasali, will be perfect for creating a credible Kemal.

### Turkish series, global popularity

With the novel translated into more than 60 languages, the museum has drawn international interest.

Visitors from China, Hungary, Italy, Japan and Russia turned up over the space of a few hours, an AFP correspondent said.

Poring over the display cabinets, Zeng Hu and Zeng Lin An, sisters from Hubei province in central China, said they were now intrigued to read the book and watch the series, although Netflix is not available in China.

Speaking to AFP at the screening late on Thursday, Pamuk said he was happy with the adaptation by Istanbul-based production company Ay Yapim after a disastrous. □

## Visit the island's popular cave sites!

(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadiriki cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an "off-road" tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves.

### Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the



Quadiriki cave, the two love bird found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadiriki Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

### Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

### The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the



biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave.

These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to

learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy. Take care to not disturb the bats' habitat.



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## PSA from the Aruba Conservation Foundation: How to behave when you see a "lora"

(Oranjestad)— The conservation of the Yellow-Shouldered Amazon, also known as the 'Lora,' relies on how we act as humans. We've seen many hikers who've encountered the 'Lora' in our protected nature areas and we can certainly imagine the pride and joy it brings to any Aruban. However, not everyone may know how to behave when encountering these clever and social birds. This guide is here to explain the behaviors that will most effectively help us in our efforts to conserve the 'Lora.'

Please, don't just read but also follow these guidelines so we can ensure the survival of these birds for future generations.

### No interfering, please

Please refrain from interfering with the "Lora". The Lora is a highly intelligent and social animal, perhaps slightly too friendly because they have gotten used to the rangers as they prepared for their reintroduction.

However, it is our collective responsibility to help

them adapt to the wild once again. Please play your part by not interfering (calling, provoking etc.) with the Lora. Simply enjoy their beauty from a safe distance.

### Be respectful and keep cats and dogs away

Pets and strays such as cats and dogs are prone to attacking other animals, especially birds, as part of their natural instincts. Please make sure your pets are kept inside of your yard or are kept on a leash when going out for a walk.



### Do not feed them food or water

You may think that giving the any food or water is doing a good deed, but it actually does not contribute to them developing survival skills in the wild. By interfering with the survival instincts of wild animals, we are doing the opposite of helping. Therefore, please do not attempt to give the Loras food or water.

### Capturing a Lora is against the law!

The biggest threat to the Lora before their extinction in 1947 was caused by human activities including poaching and killing of the Lora. Let's work collectively to prevent this from hap-

pening again. So when you see the Lora, enjoy their beauty from a distance and admire them as they flourish in the wild.

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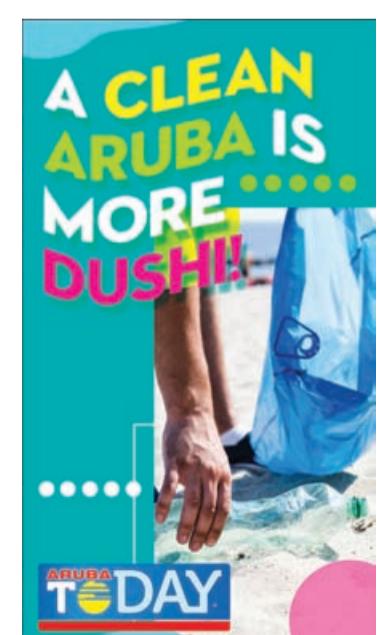
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## How Aruban beaches came to be!

(Oranjestad)—We've talked about the best beaches to visit on the island before, but have you ever wondered how Aruba got its white, sandy beaches, and why there's a clear difference between the northern and southern shores? Here are some fun facts about the development of Aruban beaches. How did Aruba get its white, sandy beaches?

Aruba's beaches have developed over the span of thousands of years. Waves crashing on the rocky formations along our coast line (which consists mainly of coral reefs) have started



to wear and tear the reefs over time, resulting in its gradual breakdown. Fish that feed off corals also contribute to this—one small bite at a time. Over the course of thousands of years, as waves contin-

ue to crash and fish continue to eat off the corals, sand starts to accumulate around the area. However, whether the sand stays there is another question to be answered, and this is where we highlight the big-

gest difference between the northern and southern coast of the island. The sand that accumulates around a torn coral reef is swept away along with the debris by the ocean stream. However, in areas where it's shallow and the stream is weaker, the sand tends to stick to the bottom faster. This is why the beaches in the south—the areas with weaker stream and shallower ocean floors—has sand that stretches for miles. In contrast, the northern area, where the stream is much stronger and the ocean floor is much deeper, there is no sand present—they

were swept away with the current!

### Why is the north deep, but the south shallow?

Aruba is a continental island. The island actually forms part of South America, and the space between Aruba and the South American continent is simply referred to as land that runs under the ocean. This is why it gets gradually deeper in the south, whereas the ocean floor in the north runs steeply to the bottom.

Source: archival document provided by the National Archive of Aruba (ANA).

## Aruba's kite flying tradition

(Oranjestad)—Every year for King's Day, Arubans gather with friends and family to fly kites. Big or small, paper or plastic, blue skies fill up with these colorful flying contraptions, brightening our yearly celebration of the Dutch Monarch.

The tradition of flying kites starts at home in the weeks leading up to King's Day. These kites were traditionally made with things found in the nearby mondi\* and in the kitchen at home. Using dried up cactus sticks for the frame, old news papers, and glue made from flour, water and salt to dry faster (some people even use cornstarch slurry as glue), kids usually make their own kites with their friends, parents or other close family members. Tails are made



from old bed sheets, ripped and tied together to create a long string of fabric trailing behind the back end of the kite. To finish off the process, people used fish lines or thin rope to tie three corners of the kite together. Another long string of rope

is tied in the knotted center and bundled up, used to steer the kite as it flies in the air. Decorating the kite was especially important, and children would use paint to create their own designs—the more colorful, the better!



People usually fly their kites in big open fields, like empty soccer and baseball fields found all around the island around noon, when the sun is at its brightest. In the past few years, kite flying has become a sport in which groups of people

would battle against each other to see whose kite is the biggest, the prettiest, and whose could fly flawlessly and longer in the air.

\*Mondi: Aruban woods.

## The Bali Restaurant: a touristic hot spot and lost gem on the island

(Oranjestad)—Once located by the yacht dock in front of the Parliament building, the Bali Restaurant was once both a touristic and local hot spot, and nowadays it's considered a forgotten gem on the island.

Known as "the floating restaurant", Bali first opened in 1955 by Willem "Bill" Strijland, who had experience in Javanese cuisine. At the time, the restaurant was pretty exclusive—with space to host only 25 guests. Yet, 4 years later, it was named the best restaurant in the Caribbean by the Caribbean Tourist Association.

The restaurant was probably most iconic for its



Javanese-inspired exterior with its pointy, slanted roofs. However, the first version of Bali did not look like that at all but was still considered as one of the most popular restaurants on the island at the time. The restaurant saw three different owners during its existence, during which it underwent various renovations and

rebranding. In 1964, the restaurant was taken over by Karel "Carl" Schmand. Over the years, the restaurant needed constant renovation and repair, mainly due to its vulnerability to leaks and the unstable pillars underneath the foundation. However, the biggest change made to the restaurant happened in

the year 1970—still under the ownership of Schmand, when it got its iconic pointy roofs. The restaurant was also expanded to host a total of 85 guests. This was "The New Bali", who had its official (re)opening in 1972. After 1972, when Ronny Schmand took over, the restaurant saw yet another expansion; this time complete with a long bar and dance floor, where guests enjoyed live music from legendary Aruban musician and composer, Toti Arends.

After 1989, the restaurant was again handed over to other owners, and since then suffered from unstable pillars underneath the foundation, resulting in various leaks and overflowing of

water into the restaurant. And as most great things come to an end, so did the survival and maintenance of the Bali Restaurant. However, folks today reminisce its legacy, and it's now considered a lost monument.

Be a part of the conversation: if you or any family member of yours have a memory of the Bali restaurant, whether it be a picture or just a story, share it with us! We would love to see this legendary hot spot through the lens of our visitors!

Source and pictures credit to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers.

## Create museum memories with the entire family!

Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you to these locations.

**Museum of Industry Aruba**  
The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas. This museum presents the history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments fund in 2003 so it could be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruban Museum Foundation (FMA), which is a foundation that maintains, preserves, and protects the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The muse-



Museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm.

For more information check out their Facebook page: Museum of Industry Aruba.

**Archaeological Museum of Aruba**

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury complex in downtown Oranjestad has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its

collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1,700 m<sup>2</sup>.

In 1997 the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004 a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006 restoration and construction work began on the monumental



buildings and the new to build exhibition space. In December 2007 the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location the National Archaeological Museum Aruba uses approximately 500 m<sup>2</sup> for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit showcases archaeological objects and conveys modern exhibition techniques information on

the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum regularly hosts public seminars, special exhibitions and workshop for visitors to enjoy.

The museum is open daily from 9 am till 5 pm.

For more information check out the Facebook page National Archaeological Museum Aruba or website: [www.manaruba.org](http://www.manaruba.org)

Editor's note: Pictures are property of the respective museums.

## Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the same, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the subexistence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in



Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experiences by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

**Literary life**  
Throughout the 19th cen-

tury and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention

of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread,

as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness in the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamento, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

### The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/Dera Gay (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Source: Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas

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## CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Lose traction

1 Knights' titles

5 "Wait a minute!"

11 Brad Pitt movie

12 Incite

13 Amo, —, amat (Latin lesson)

14 Drinking establishment

15 Kitschy quality

17 Skirt edge

18 Joel Coen's brother

22 Hotel units

24 Boosted

25 "Aladdin" monkey

26 Right away

27 Suggest

30 Yard tools

32 Minuscule

33 Writer Tan

34 Curved sword

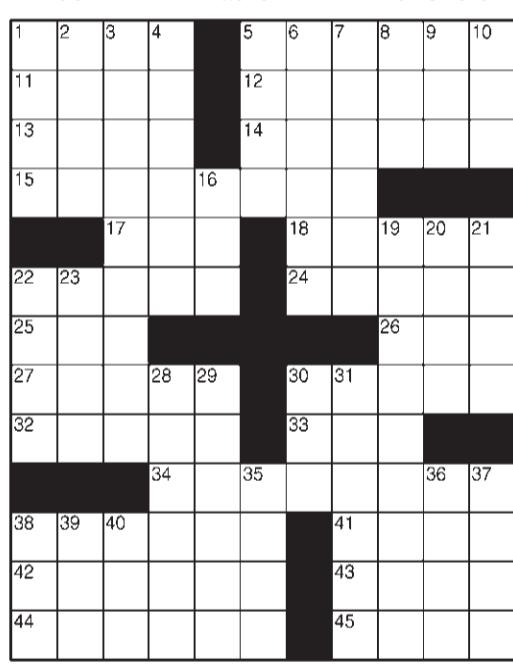
38 Drinking establishment

41 Departed

42 Arthurian island

43 Player's fee

44 Draws toward midnight



3-2

A X Y D L B A A X R  
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-2

CRYPTOQUOTE

R B W U B I U X R D U N W U , H L H

O U M U R Z M X I N U N B I X N U R U M Z

H R E X I N , O C X Z Q B B D O B A E N H

Q M H I Y : " C B O Z B Q A H E N X

Q B X Z . " — R Z U G U I O M H Y C Z

Cryptoquote: POWER IS BEING TOLD YOU'RE NOT LOVED AND NOT BEING DESTROYED BY IT. — MADONNA

## Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 17 - 24 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH
TUE	17	CARNIVAL HORIZON NORWEGIAN SKY	08.00 13.30	22.00 22.30	B C 1 1
WED	18	SERENADE OF THE SEAS FREEWINDS	08.00 06.00	23.00 ****	C E 1
THU	19	AIDABLU MSC DIVINA	08.00 08.00	18.00 18.00	B C 1 1
FRI	20	NORWEGIAN STAR	11.00	20.00	C 1
SUN	22	ISLAND PRINCESS EXPLORA I	08.00 08.00	17.00 18.00	B C 1 1
MON	23	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2 FREEWINDS - Dept.	08.00 ****	20.00 22.30	C E 1 -
TUE	24	OCEANIA INSIGNIA NORWEGIAN SKY OASIS OF THE SEAS	08.00 13.30 08.00	17.00 22.30 23.00	B C I 1 1

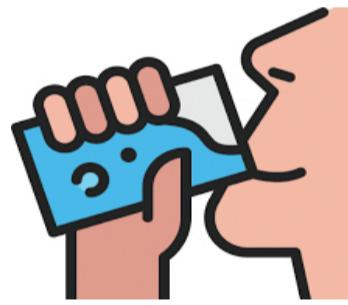
## Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



## Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



## Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



## Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

## SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

## King Classic Sudoku

	1	2						
	6		4	7	9			
	7					6		
9								
7	5		3	2	9		1	
			4	7			3	
	4				1			
5			8	1	9			
6	1	9		4	5			

Difficulty: ★★★★

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Difficulty: ★★★

## Answer to previous puzzle

8	9	6	2	5	3	1	4	7
3	2	1	7	9	4	5	6	8
7	5	4	6	1	8	2	3	9
5	4	8	1	3	6	9	7	2
2	7	9	4	8	5	3	1	6
6	1	3	9	2	7	4	8	5
1	6	2	3	7	9	8	5	4
4	3	5	8	6	2	7	9	1
9	8	7	5	4	1	6	2	3

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2/19

2/20



A woman shows her affection for her cat at a Mass for domesticated animals on St. Francis of Assisi's Day, during World Animal Day celebrations in Zapopan, Jalisco, Mexico on October 4, 2025.

## Could insight from cats lead to breast cancer cures?

### Washington, United States

Owning a cat offers many health benefits, including reduced stress and emotional support, and new research suggests our feline friends might also offer clues to better treat certain cancers.

That's according to a new study published Thursday in the journal *Science*, which investigated cancers in cats and found significant parallels with how the disease plays out in humans.

Previous studies had highlighted similar links between dogs and humans, but little research focused on cats, said co-author Louise van der Weyden, a scientist at the British Wellcome Sanger Institute.

Cats, just like dogs, provide "a great model for us," she told AFP, because they share an environment with humans that includes similar pollution, such as second-hand smoke.

"They develop other illnesses that we do when you get cancer," Van der Weyden told AFP, explaining that cancer can be accompanied by ailments like diabetes or heart disease. Not infrequently, she said, the "animals will have that too."

With this principle as their guide, the international research team analyzed cancerous tumor samples from nearly 500 domestic cats across five countries. □

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<b>Taxi Serv. Aruba</b>	583 3232
<b>A1 Taxi Serv.</b>	280 2828

#### TRAVEL INFO

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<b>Avianca</b>	588 0059
<b>Jet Blue</b>	588 2244
<b>Surinam</b>	582 7896

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Tel. 582 5051	
<b>Alcoholics Anonymous</b>	
Tel. 736 2952	
<b>Narcotics Anonymous</b>	
Tel. 583 8989	
<b>Fundacion Contra Violencia</b>	
Relacional Tel. 583 5400	
<b>Centre for Diabetes</b>	
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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

220155

# OpenAI's Altman tells leaders regulation 'urgently' needed

New Delhi, India

The world urgently needs to regulate artificial intelligence, OpenAI head Sam Altman said Thursday at a summit in New Delhi to address the risks and opportunities posed by the fast-evolving technology.

Altman, CEO of the company behind ChatGPT, has called for global oversight in the past but last year warned that taking too tight an approach could hold the United States back in the AI race.

Frenzied demand for generative AI has turbocharged profits for companies while fuelling anxiety about the impact on society and the planet.

"Centralisation of this technology in one company or country could lead to ruin," Altman said on Thursday.

"This is not to suggest that we won't need any regulation or safeguards. We obviously do, urgently, like we have for other powerful technologies."



OpenAI CEO Sam Altman attends the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on February 19, 2026.

The AI Impact Summit is the fourth annual gathering to discuss how to handle advanced computing power. It is the largest yet and the first in a developing country, with India taking the opportunity to push its ambitions to catch up with the United States and China.

"We must democratise AI. It must become a medium for inclusion and empowerment," Prime Minister Narendra Modi told the gathering.

"We are entering an era where humans and intelligence systems co-create, co-work and co-evolve," he said. "We must resolve that AI is used for the global common good."

#### Gates cancels

Modi's comments were echoed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who said "AI must belong to everyone."

He called on tech tycoons to support a \$3 billion global fund to boost AI skills and makes computing power more affordable.

"The future of AI cannot be decided by a handful of countries or left to the whims of a few billionaires," he said.

Researchers and campaigners say stronger action is needed to combat emerging issues, from job disruption to online abuse and the electricity demands of data centres.

But the broad focus of the New Delhi event, and vague promises made at previous summits, could make concrete commitments unlikely.

Google's Sundar Pichai and Anthropic's Dario Amodei also spoke Thursday. A photo opportunity on stage featuring Modi and the group of tech bosses

sparked ridicule online after Amodei and OpenAI's Altman awkwardly refused to hold hands.

Microsoft founder Bill Gates, facing questions over his ties to late sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, cancelled just hours before his appearance.

The billionaire said this month he regrets "every minute" he spent with Epstein. The mention of someone's name in the Epstein files does not in itself imply any wrongdoing by that person.

#### Big deals

Dozens of world leaders and ministers have joined tens of thousands of people from across the sector at the summit.

French President Emmanuel Macron, last year's host, said he was determined to ensure safe oversight of AI. "Europe is not blindly fo-

cused on regulation -- Europe is a space for innovation and investment, but it is a safe space," he said.

India expects more than \$200 billion in investments over the next two years, and US tech titans have unveiled new deals and infrastructure projects this week. OpenAI and Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) announced they would build hyperscale AI data centre capacity in India.

Google said it planned to lay subsea cables from India as part of an existing \$15 billion AI infrastructure investment.

Power-hungry AI data centres are under construction worldwide on a massive scale as companies race to develop super-intelligent systems.

Their heavy use of electricity, and water to cool hot servers, have sparked alarm at a time when nations have pledged to decarbonise grids to tackle climate change.

India leapt to third place last year in an annual global ranking of AI competitiveness calculated by Stanford researchers, although experts say it has a long way to go before it can rival the United States and China.

Leaders are expected to deliver a statement on Friday about how they plan to handle AI technology. □

## AI cannot be left to 'whims of a few billionaires': U.N. chief



U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres delivers a speech during the AI Impact Summit in New Delhi on February 19, 2026.

New Delhi, India

U.N. chief Antonio Guterres warned technology leaders Thursday of the risks of artificial intelligence, saying its future cannot be left to "the whims of a few billionaires". Speaking at a global AI summit in India, the UN chief called on tech tycoons to support a \$3 billion global fund to ensure open access to the fast-advancing technology for all.

"AI must belong to everyone," he said.

"The future of AI cannot be decided by a handful of countries or left to the whims of a few billionaires," he added, warning the world risked deepening inequality unless urgent steps were taken.

"Done right, AI can... accelerate breakthroughs in medicine, expand learning opportunities, strengthen food security, bolster climate action and disaster preparedness and improve access to vital public services," he said. □



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## Mavs confirm Irving will miss rest of NBA season

### Los Angeles, United States

The Dallas Mavericks said star Kyrie Irving will miss the rest of the NBA season as he continues to recover from knee surgery in March.

Nine-time All-Star Irving hasn't played this season as he recovers from surgery to repair a torn left anterior cruciate ligament.

"This decision wasn't easy, but it's the right one," Irving said in a statement. "I am grateful for the Mavericks organization, my teammates and our fans for their



**Kyrie Irving #11 and Anthony Davis #3 of the Dallas Mavericks stand with their teammates in the second half against the Brooklyn Nets at American Airlines Center on December 12, 2025 in**

continued support throughout the process.

"I am looking forward to coming back stronger next season. The belief and drive

I have inside only grows." The Mavericks said that Irving is making "steady progress in rehabilitation and will remain actively engaged with the team through the remainder of the season".

ESPN reported that the Mavericks hope that Irving will be able to return to practice before the end of the season so that he can begin building on-court chemistry with sensational rookie Cooper Flagg.

The Mavs began preparations to rebuild around

Flagg when they traded 10-time NBA All-Star Anthony Davis to the Washington Wizards in a multi-player deal at the trade deadline this month.

The deal also involved multiple future draft picks, including a first-round pick from Oklahoma City in this year's draft.

The Mavs are currently 12th in the Western Conference and at 19-35 are seven games outside of the play-in.□

## USA beat Canada 2-1 to win Olympic women's ice hockey gold medal

### Milan, Italy

The USA beat defending champions Canada 2-1 in overtime to win the Olympic women's ice hockey gold medal thanks to Megan Keller's spectacular winner on Thursday.

It was the first time the Americans have won the women's title since the 2018 Pyeongchang Games. Keller skilfully deked a Canadian defender and beat goaltender Ann-Renee Desbiens just over four minutes into overtime.

Her goal sparked huge celebrations on the Team USA bench and among the thousands of US fans in the Santagiulia Arena in Milan.

- Nakai targets Olympic skating upset -

Japanese teenager Ami Nakai goes for a shock Olympic gold in women's figure skating on Thursday after ski mountaineering made its debut in heavy snow at the Winter Games. Nakai, 17, set the pace in the short programme on Tuesday, upstaging teammate Kaori Sakamoto, a three-time Olympic medallist who has never won gold.

The 25-year-old Sakamoto is saying goodbye to the sport and would dearly love to end her career by topping the podium at the Milano Ice Skating Arena. Sakamoto is just 1.48 points behind her younger teammate ahead of Thursday's



**USA's players celebrate after winning the women's gold medal ice hockey match between USA and Canada at the Milano Santagiulia Ice Hockey Arena during the Milano Cortina 2026 Winter Olympic Games in Milan, on February 19, 2026.**

free skating programme, while US world champion Alysa Liu also has her eyes on the main prize.

Nakai said she felt like she was "dreaming" after taking the lead at the half-way stage, though insisted Sakamoto remained the favourite.

Sakamoto said she would love to sign off with a medal.

"It would be very nice, but I want to let everybody know what I have done over my career," she said. "I want people to know that there was a skater of this kind in Japan who had performed for a long period."

In the snow-swept moun-

tains above Bormio, ski mountaineering -- an adrenaline-packed sprint requiring athletes to negotiate uphill climbs on ski and foot before descending by ski -- made its Olympic bow.

Switzerland's Marianne Fatton won gold in the women's ski sprint, beating France's Emily Harrop by 2.38sec.

In the men's skimo event, Russian Nikita Filippov claimed the first medal at the Milan-Cortina Games for individual neutral athletes (AIN) when he bagged silver.

The race was won by Spain's Oriol Cardona Coll in 2min 34.03sec with Filip-

pov 1.52sec behind. It was Spain's first gold medal at a Winter Games since the 1972 event in Sapporo, Japan.

"Winning this gold after so many years, it means a lot for us as a country," said Cardona Coll, 31. "It also means a lot for the ski mountaineering family to be here."

Russia and Belarus have been banned from international competition since Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022. Filippov and his AIN teammates have been allowed to compete at the Winter Olympics in Italy under a neutral banner having met strict conditions.□

- Canada v USA hockey battle -

The USA and Canada meet on Thursday in the final of the women's ice hockey tournament after Switzerland beat Sweden 2-1 to clinch bronze.

Canada have maintained their record of appearing in the gold medal game of every women's hockey tournament since it became part of the Winter Games at Nagano in 1998. The Canadians have won five of the previous seven gold medal matches, including a 3-2 victory over the Americans at the Beijing 2022 Olympics.

The men's tournament could produce the same match-up after the USA and pre-tournament favourites Canada stayed on track in Wednesday's quarter-finals.

Canada go on to face reigning champions Finland and the USA will play Slovakia, with both semi-finals taking place on Friday.

Recent political tensions between the North American neighbours could add spice to the contest.

China's freeski star Eileen Gu, who has one more chance to win a gold medal in Italy, is scheduled to compete in the women's halfpipe qualifiers after other events in Livigno were postponed due to heavy snow.□

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## NBA mulling 'every possible remedy' as 'tanking' worsens

**Los Angeles, United States**  
NBA teams are increasingly losing games on purpose to improve their draft prospects and basketball must consider every possible remedy to stamp out deliberate "tanking," the league's chief said Saturday.

Speaking at his annual news conference before the NBA All-Star Game, commissioner Adam Silver warned that current punishments to prevent teams from gaming the system that allocates top new players are "not working." "Are we seeing behavior that is worse this year than we've seen in recent memory? Yes, is my view," said Silver.

The NBA Draft system means the teams that finish lowest in the standings have the best chances of landing the top prospects. But it has long contributed to "tanking" lowly teams throwing in the towel long



NBA Commissioner Adam Silver speaks at a press conference during 2026 NBA All-Star Weekend at Intuit Dome on February 14, 2026 in Inglewood, California.

before the regular season ends in hopes of landing a franchise-altering player in the draft. This week, the NBA fined the Utah Jazz and Indiana Pacers over "management

of their rosters." The Jazz were fined \$500,000 for conduct detrimental to the league in games against the Orlando Magic on February 7 and the Miami Heat on Febru-

ary 9. The Pacers were fined \$100,000 for violating the player participation policy in connection with a February 3 game against the Jazz.

"I mean, what we're doing, what we're seeing right now, is not working. There's no question about it," he said.

The Jazz, 13th in the Western Conference and eight games out of the play-in, were up by three points going into the fourth quarter of their February 9 game against Miami and were dominating in the paint.

But Jazz coach Will Hardy benched his top players -- a similar move to what he had done in their game against Orlando two days earlier.

"It has been part of this league for a long time," said Silver. □