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Steve Mills, Managing Director & Partner, Chief AI Ethics Officer, Global Leader, BCG Center for Digital Government speak onstage during the Semafor World Economy Summit Fall Edition at Gallup HQ on October 15, 2025 in Washington, DC.

Life with AI causing human brain 'fry'

New York, United States Heavy users of artificial intelligence report being overwhelmed by trying to keep up with and on top of the technology designed to make their lives easier. Too many lines of code to analyze, armies of AI assistants to wrangle, and lengthy prompts to draft are among the laments by hard-core AI adopters.

Consultants at Boston Consulting Group (BCG) have dubbed the phenomenon "AI brain fry," a state of mental exhaustion stemming "from the excessive use or supervision of artificial intelligence tools, pushed beyond our cognitive limits."

The rise of AI agents that tend to computer tasks on demand has put users in the position of managing smart, fast digital workers rather than having to grind through jobs themselves. "It's a brand-new kind of cognitive load," said Ben Wigler, co-founder of the start-up LoveMind AI. "You have to really babysit these models."

People experiencing AI burnout are not casually dabbling with the technology. They are creating legions of agents that need to be constantly managed, according to Tim Norton, founder of the AI integration consultancy novreLabs.

"That's what's causing the burnout," Norton wrote in an X post.

However, BCG and others do not see it as a case of AI causing people to get burned out on their jobs.

A BCG study of 1,488 professionals in the United States actually found a decline in burnout rates when AI took over repetitive work tasks.

- Coding vigilance -

For now, "brain fry" is primarily a bane for software developers given that AI agents have excelled quickly at writing computer code.

"The cruel irony is that AI-generated code requires more careful review than human-written code," software engineer Siddhant Khare wrote in a blog post.

"It is very scary to commit to hundreds of lines of AI-written code because there is a risk of security flaws or simply not understanding the entire codebase," added Adam Mackintosh, a programmer for a Canadian company.

And if AI agents are not kept on course by a human, they could misunderstand an instruction and wander down an errant processing path, resulting in a business paying for wasted computing power.

- 'Irritable' -

Wigler noted that the promise of hitting goals fast with AI tempts tech start-up teams already prone to long workdays to lose track of time and stay on the job even deeper into the night. "There is a unique kind of reward hacking that can go on when you have productivity at the scale that encourages even later hours," Wigler said.

Mackintosh recalled spending 15 consecutive hours fine-tuning around 25,000 lines of code in an application. □



U.S. Vice President JD Vance addresses a Fraud Task Force meeting in the Indian Treaty Room at the White House in Washington, DC, on 27 March, 2026.

U.S. vice president says he's obsessed with UFOs

Washington, United States

U.S. Vice President JD Vance vowed Friday to plumb US government information about unidentified flying objects, adding that in his view, aliens are in fact demons.

"I have not been able to spend enough time on this to really understand it, but I am going to, trust me. I'm obsessed with this," a laughing Vance told the conservative podcaster Benny Johnson.

"I've still got three more years as vice president. I will get to the bottom of the UFO files," he added.

Johnson had asked about President Donald Trump's order to federal agencies in February to begin "identifying and releasing" government files related to UFOs and aliens.

Trump said he was taking the step "based on the tremendous interest shown," the same month that former president Barack Obama said publicly that aliens were "real," though he had not seen them.

Regarding those statements, Trump told reporters that Obama "gave classified information, he is not supposed to be doing that."

Vance for his part told Johnson on Friday, "I don't think they're aliens. I think they're demons," describing this as a Christian understanding of "celestial beings who fly around who do weird things to people."

No evidence has been produced of intelligent life beyond Earth.

Interest in UFOs and related phenomena has been renewed in recent years as the US government investigated numerous reports of seemingly supernatural aircraft, amid worries that adversaries could be testing highly advanced technologies.

In March 2024, the Pentagon released a report saying it had no proof that unidentified aerial phenomena were alien technology, with many suspicious sightings turning out to be merely weather balloons, spy planes, satellites and other normal activity. □

The California medical breakthrough redefining the future of Spina bifida

SACRAMENTO, CA — In a sterile, high-tech operating suite at UC Davis Children's Hospital, a medical team recently achieved what was once considered the realm of science fiction. They performed surgery on a patient who had not yet been born, using a pioneering stem cell therapy to treat spina bifida before the infant took its first breath. This landmark clinical trial, known as the "CuRe Trial" (Cellular Therapy for In Utero Repair of Myelomeningocele), is now offering a revolutionary path forward for families facing one of the most challenging birth defects.

Spina bifida, specifically myelomeningocele, occurs when the spinal cord fails to develop or close properly while a fetus is in the womb. This often leaves the delicate nerves of the spinal cord exposed to the corrosive effects of amniotic fluid. The result can be lifelong: permanent paralysis, cognitive challenges, and bowel or bladder dysfunction. For decades, the standard of care was surgery after birth, which closed the gap but could not undo the neurological damage already



sustained in utero.

However, the team in Sacramento, led by world-renowned fetal surgeon Dr. Diana Farmer and bioengineer Dr. Aijun Wang, believed they could do more than just close a hole. They wanted to heal the nerves.

The breakthrough involves a "patch" made of a specialized biological scaffold seeded with mesenchymal stem cells. These cells are harvested from placental tissue, which possesses a unique ability to promote healing and tissue regeneration. During a complex mid-pregnancy surgery, doctors open the mother's uterus and carefully apply this stem cell patch directly onto the exposed spinal cord of the fetus.

"We aren't just performing a mechanical repair," Dr. Wang explained during a recent briefing. "The stem cells act as a tiny pharmacy, secreting growth factors and anti-inflammatory signals that protect the spinal cord from further damage and actually encourage the repair of neural pathways while the baby is still developing."

The results from the first group of participants have been nothing short of miraculous. One of the first "trailblazers" of the study, a toddler named Robbie, was born with the tell-tale scarring of spina bifida surgery but with a stunning difference: she is hitting physical milestones that were previously thought impossible for

children with her diagnosis.

Robbie's mother, who joined the trial after a devastating prenatal diagnosis, recalls the moment she saw her daughter move her legs for the first time. "We were told to prepare for a life in a wheelchair," she said, watching her daughter navigate a playroom. "To see her standing, to see her toes wiggle it feels like we were given a miracle wrapped in science."

The success of the CuRe Trial marks a fundamental shift in how the medical community views prenatal intervention. By treating the condition during the second trimester, doctors are taking advantage of the fetus's incredible natural regenerative capacity. At that stage of development, the body is essentially a "blank slate" for healing, allowing the stem cells to integrate and protect the spinal cord before the damage becomes irreversible.

However, the road to this breakthrough was not short. Dr. Farmer has spent over twenty years researching fetal surgery, a journey that began with the landmark

MOMS (Management of Myelomeningocele Study) trial in the early 2000s. That study proved that surgery before birth was better than surgery after birth. This new stem cell integration is the "MOMS 2.0," taking the success of fetal surgery and supercharging it with regenerative medicine.

The implications of this success extend far beyond spina bifida. If stem cells can be used to repair a developing spine, researchers are hopeful the same technology could eventually be applied to other prenatal conditions, such as heart defects or diaphragmatic hernias.

It signals the dawn of an era where "the womb is the new waiting room" for life-saving cures.

As the clinical trial moves into its next phases, the medical community is watching with bated breath. While the procedure is still considered experimental and requires a highly specialized team of surgeons, anesthesiologists, and neonatologists, the early data suggests a future where spina bifida is no longer a life-altering sentence of paralysis. □

Could a common seizure medication stop Alzheimer's before it starts?

For decades, the battle against Alzheimer's disease has been a game of "catch-up." Modern treatments like lecanemab and donanemab focus on clearing away the sticky amyloid-beta plaques that have already clogged a patient's brain. But by the time these plaques are visible on a scan, the damage is often irreversible. Now, researchers at Northwestern University have discovered that a common, inexpensive anti-seizure medication may hold the key to a different strategy: stopping the toxic proteins from being produced in the first place.

The study, recently published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*, highlights levetiracetam

better known by its brand name, Keppra. First approved by the FDA in 1999 to treat epilepsy, this drug is now showing a surprising ability to disrupt the earliest molecular steps of Alzheimer's.

The "paradoxical" discovery

For ten years, senior author Jeffrey Savas, an associate professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, has been investigating what goes wrong at the very beginning of the disease. His team discovered a "paradoxical stage" where pre-synaptic proteins begin to accumulate long before synapses are lost or dementia symptoms appear. They found that a specific,

highly toxic protein fragment called amyloid-beta 42 builds up inside synaptic vesicles the tiny sacs neurons use to send signals. When the team treated human neurons and animal models with levetiracetam, the drug effectively blocked the formation of this toxic peptide.

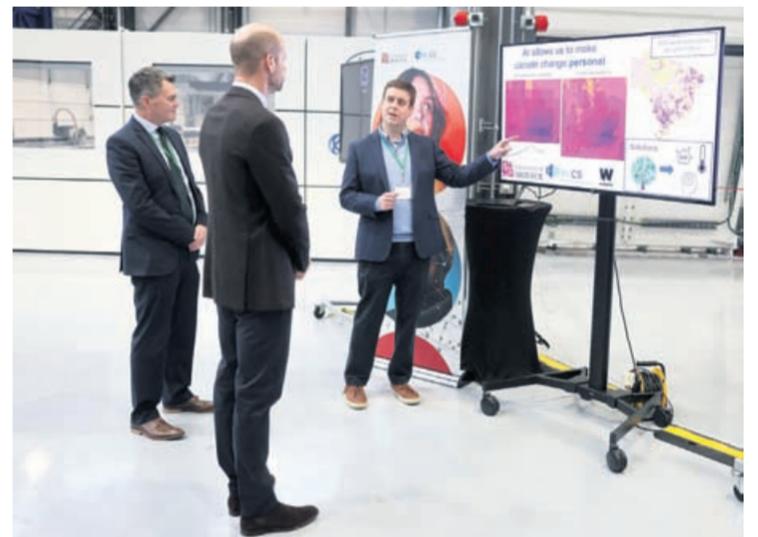
According to a Northwestern University press release, this mechanism marks a shift from clearing existing plaques to preventing their initial formation.

A mechanism for brain signals

By binding to the protein SV2A during the "synaptic vesicle cycle," the drug slows the recycling process and keeps the amyloid precursor protein

(APP) on the surface of neurons longer. This prevents APP from entering

internal pathways, effectively stopping it from being cut into toxic fragments. □



Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales listens to a scientist during a visit to Isambard-AI, the UK's most powerful supercomputer, who are exploring how the supercomputer can help develop new drugs to combat heart disease and Alzheimer's as well as predicting extreme weather, during a visit to the University of Bristol in the city of Bristol, south-west England, on January 22, 2026.

Igniting ambition: How an Indianapolis engineer is launching the next generation of STEM leaders

In the heart of Indianapolis, the typical sounds of a neighborhood park clinking swings and bouncing basketballs are increasingly being punctuated by the sudden, triumphant whoosh of pressurized air and the sight of plastic bottles soaring toward the clouds. This is the "Rocket Boot Camp," a grassroots initiative that is proving you don't need a multi-billion-dollar Cape Canaveral budget to reach the stars.

The program is the brainchild of Marcus Reed, a local aerospace engineer who spent his career designing complex propulsion systems for global firms. Despite his professional success, Reed noticed a persistent gap in his field: a lack of representation from the community he grew up in. Instead of simply acknowledging the "STEM gap," Reed decided to bridge it with cardboard fins and water-fueled engines.

Launched in partner-



Tanaka Chonyera with one of the rockets built through his Indianapolis boot camp.

ship with a local minority engineering program, the Rocket Boot Camp is a free, hands-on workshop designed for children ages 8 to 14. But calling it a "camp" almost feels too formal. It is an outdoor laboratory where the neighborhood becomes a launchpad and failures are celebrated as much as

successes.

"In school, kids are often taught that science is a series of facts to memorize for a test," Reed says while helping a ten-year-old adjust the trajectory of a soda-bottle rocket. "But true engineering is about trial, error, and the thrill of seeing something you built

actually work. When a kid sees their rocket clear the tree line, their whole perspective on what they are capable of changes in an instant."

The curriculum is deceptively rigorous. Over the course of the program, students don't just "play" with rockets; they learn the fundamentals of New-

ton's Laws of Motion, aerodynamics, and structural integrity. They use CAD (Computer-Aided Design) software on donated tablets to model their fins before cutting them out of recycled materials.

The impact, however, goes far beyond physics. By targeting underserved areas and offering the program at no cost, Reed is removing the financial and geographical barriers that often prevent minority students from exploring high-tech career paths. For many participants, this is their first interaction with a professional engineer who looks like them—a "see it to be it" moment that is critical for long-term career inspiration.

One parent, whose daughter has attended every session this spring, noted a marked shift in her child's confidence. "She used to say math was 'too hard.'" □

The secret garden under the solar panels: How green energy is saving rare wildflowers

For decades, the expansion of solar energy was often viewed as a zero-sum game for conservation. To build a massive solar farm, developers frequently cleared thousands of rolling acres, displacing native flora and fauna in the name of carbon neutrality. But in the arid landscapes of the American West and the sun-drenched plains of the Midwest, a surprising ecological phenomenon is turning that narrative on its head. Solar farms are becoming accidental sanctuaries for some of the country's rarest plants.

Take, for instance, the three-corner milkvetch. This delicate, spindly legume with its translucent seed pods is a federally protected species that struggles to survive in the blistering heat of the Nevada desert. Typically, the milkvetch is at the mercy

of a changing climate intense droughts and soaring temperatures that evaporate every drop of morning dew. However, researchers have discovered that inside the fenced-off perimeter of a nearby utility-scale solar array, the milkvetch isn't just surviving; it is thriving. The secret lies in the "shaded microclimate" created by the thousands of photo-

voltaic panels. In the wild, these plants are scorched by twelve hours of direct, relentless sun. Beneath the panels, however, they enjoy a shifting mosaic of shade. This cooling effect slows the evaporation of moisture from the soil, keeping the ground damp long after the surrounding open desert has turned to dust.

"We used to think of solar

farms as industrial dead zones," says Dr. Elena Vasquez, a conservation biologist who has been monitoring the site. "But what we're seeing is a form of 'techno-ecological synergy.' The panels act like a mechanical canopy, mimicking the role that large trees or rock formations might play in a natural ecosystem. They provide a refuge from the extreme heat."

The phenomenon isn't limited to the desert. In states like Minnesota and Oregon, "pollinator-friendly" solar mandates are transforming the land beneath the panels into vibrant wildflower meadows. By planting native species like purple coneflower and milkweed, solar developers are creating "stepping stone" habitats for bees and butterflies. Because these sites are fenced off

and human foot traffic is nearly non-existent, the plants are protected from the herbicides and heavy machinery common in traditional agriculture.

This "dual-use" land management often called agrivoltaics is proving that renewable energy and biodiversity are not mutually exclusive. In fact, the plants provide a service back to the solar panels. Through a process called evapotranspiration, the plants release moisture into the air, which naturally cools the surrounding atmosphere. Because solar panels actually become less efficient as they overheat, this botanical air-conditioning helps the farm produce more electricity.

For small communities, these "solar havens" offer a glimpse into a more harmonious future. □

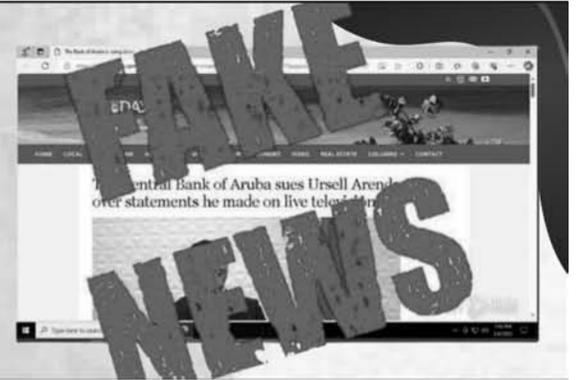


A rare desert plant in Nevada called three-corner milkvetch.

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An olive ridley sea turtle hatchling moves on a beach after emerging from its nest near Libreville on February 15, 2026.

Gabon battles for baby sea turtles' survival

Libreville, Gabon

Small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, newly hatched sea turtles emerged on a Gabonese beach to embark on the treacherous 10-metre (33-foot) scramble across the sand to the ocean.

"The survival rate for turtles is one in 1,000," Francois Boussamba, a Gabonese turtle expert and head of the NGO Aventures Sans Frontieres (Adventures Without Borders), told AFP, scouring for nests.

Conservationists from NGOs and the national parks agency patrol Gabon's beaches daily during the nesting season to protect the turtles' nests.

Those under threat are moved to a hatchery, a fenced enclosure near the sea, where the eggs are kept safe until they are ready to hatch.

On Pongara National Park's white sandy beaches, about 30 minutes by boat from the capital Libreville, conditions are optimal for nesting: wild coastline, a favourable equatorial climate and an open ocean

beach with gentle slopes, ideal for the females.

But dangers lurk. Nests are threatened by coastal erosion due to encroaching sea levels, or myriad predators such as crabs and birds that prevent the eggs from reaching their 60-day incubation period, Boussamba said.

"The chances of survival are tiny," he said.

- Muscle up -

In Libreville, every morning around 7:00 am, volunteers from the Project Turtles Tahiti Gabon association criss-cross the beach and check the nests in the hatchery.

After one has hatched, the baby turtles have to be moved so they can reach the sea -- but they are never put straight into the water.

"They need to build up their muscles so they can swim in the ocean," volunteer Clemence said.

Four species of turtles green, olive ridley, hawksbill and leatherback come to nest along Gabon's 900 kilometres (560 miles) of coastline from October to April.

It has the highest nesting density on the African continent, according to the US-based NGO Wildlife Conservation Society.

Gabon is the world's leading nesting site for the leatherback turtle, the largest of the species and listed as threatened by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

In addition to predators, sea turtles are also threatened by human activities, from plastic pollution to industrial fishing and poachers.

By watching over the eggs, the rangers in Pongara help ensure "the survival of this species", Edouard Moussavou, Pongara park's deputy director, said.

- Unpaid wages -

Since 2013, Gabon's conservation efforts had received funding from the United States, notably through the US Fish and Wildlife Service, an agency responsible for biodiversity. "If there are turtles, it means our ecosystem is sound and healthy," Boussamba said. □



People admire the cherry blossoms in full bloom along a river in Tokyo on March 29, 2026.

Japan's cherry blossom season dazzles locals and tourists

Tokyo, Japan

Japanese locals and tourists packed the country's most stunning cherry blossom spots on Monday to enjoy the dazzling flowers at full bloom.

The tiny white and pink petals of cherry flowers, known as sakura, herald the start of spring in Japan, and full bloom ushers in a brief period of boisterous outdoor parties held by residents.

Across the nation families and friends rolled out blankets and tarpaulins at parks, temples and even cemeteries over the weekend to eat and drink under cherry trees for traditional "hanami" or flower viewing gatherings. Japanese people hold "very special feelings for sakura", said Tokyo resident Akiko Nyman, 48, as she admired flowers in crowded Ueno park in the centre of the capital.

"We love it, because it is so short... it doesn't last long, it comes every year, something very special," she said. At this time of the year, weather forecasters are laser focused on when the blossom will peak in each city, and they advise excited residents on the best weather days for picnics and how long the flowers might last.

In the ancient capital of Kyoto, officials on Monday declared full bloom after examining a sample tree within the grounds of Nijo-jo Castle, a world heritage site.

- 'Good photo opportunity' -

"We observed the cherry blossoms in full bloom on March 30," Kyoto Local Meteorological Office said. Cherry flowers at ancient temples and shrines in Kyoto are particularly popular among visitors and locals. Australian tourist Olivia Martell-Groves went all in for the seasonal experience, and donned a flower-printed kimono while marvelling at the flowers.

"We wanted to see them because they're really pretty, good photo opportunities and something you can only see in certain times of the year... and also it just feels so peaceful and nice," she said. □

Beirut rescuers risk their lives to save animals

Beirut, Lebanon

Armed with thick gloves and small plastic crates Kamal, Khalil and Reem jump on two mopeds and head into Beirut's southern suburbs, which see almost daily strikes by Israeli aircraft. Hands scarred by a thousand bites and scratches, the small rescue team from Lebanese NGO Animals Lebanon uses two-wheelers to navigate streets made narrow by piles of rubble as they search for trapped animals.

In drizzling rain, the team is responding to two calls, passing from crammed central districts filled with people seeking safety into increasingly abandoned streets where Israeli air-strikes are concentrated.

The are seeking a pet cat they've been trying to trap for a week since it jumped through a bombed-out ground-floor window, and another showing signs of paralysis, they think from a recent Israeli bombing.

"We never lose hope that the cat we can't find is still around, because it will come back. This is its refuge," says volunteer Khalil Hamieh, 45.

Lebanon was pulled into the Middle East war on March 2 when Tehran-backed militant group Hezbollah fired rockets to-



Members of a rescue team from Lebanese NGO Animals Lebanon head to Beirut's southern suburbs on March 26, 2026.

wards Israel to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Israel has responded with large-scale strikes on Lebanon and a ground offensive in the country's south.

On the edge of Haret Hreik in Beirut's southern suburbs, where Hezbollah exercises a measure of de facto authority, Hamieh's colleague Issam Attar stops the jeep that will bring the rescued cats to hospital.

The mopeds can navigate onwards on two wheels,

and escape quickly if an Israeli strike is announced.

- 'A living being' -

Between Israeli air raids and Hezbollah saying filming in the southern suburbs is "strictly prohibited", media access has become more complicated lately, and AFP journalists remained outside with Attar.

"It's a living being," Attar said of why he rescues animals. "It's not guilty of wars or anything else."

"Besides the fact that we feel for animals, there's also the owners who can't get

their animals -- we can, and we want to help them."

Animals Lebanon told AFP its teams had rescued 241 animals from south Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs, areas under heavy bombardment since the start of the war.

In addition to killing over 1,100 people, the war has displaced over a million, according to Lebanese authorities. In this city without air-raid sirens, gunshots into the air warn people of incoming Israeli airstrikes.

The shooting and the ensuing explosions terrify cats es-

pecially, Animals Lebanon Operation Manager Reem Sadek said, and many families can't find their pets as they rush to evacuate.

"Cats in particular, when there's a strike, they panic," she said.

"We're perhaps the only people with the experience to find... and capture them."

Some of the cats can't be immediately reunited with their owners, who have nowhere to keep them as they sleep rough on the streets or crowd into shelters, so the cats stay at the Animals Lebanon office.

- 'Risking our lives' -

The war has made everything more complicated for the rescuers, including the evacuation from Lebanon of a five-month-old lion cub, still small but growing bigger by the day inside their office.

They confiscated her from wildlife traffickers shortly before the war broke out, as they were searching for another trafficked lion cub that they later tracked to Lebanon's rural northeast.

The airlines capable of bringing the lions from Lebanon to South Africa are not flying due to the war, so they're trying to evacuate the cubs to Cyprus by boat. □



Charleroi, Belgium

Belgian artist Nicolas Buissart started doubling as a tour guide as a joke after a newspaper in the neighbouring Netherlands named his city the ugliest in the world.

Some 15 years later, he is still arranging tours of Charleroi for visitors seeking beauty in dilapidated factories and rundown warehouses the remnants

of the city's industrial past. "Wallonia used to be prosperous; it's a cradle of capitalism of sorts," he says of the surrounding French-speaking region.

"The problem with capitalism is that it leaves a lot of waste behind".

Yet that's exactly what the dozen pensioners from the northern French city of Lille he's driving around Charleroi have come to

World's 'ugliest' city finds allure in decay

see on a dreary March day. Urban exploration, or "urbex" for short the underground pastime of exploring abandoned places, at times skirting the law in the process has grown into a global movement over the past two decades.

Haunting complexes with shattered windows and moulded ceilings draw amateur photographers, selfie takers and thrill seekers from as far away as Berlin or Detroit.

Buissart's "city safari" takes visitors up close to the slag heaps and giant ruins of steel and concrete that shape Charleroi's landscape.

"There's an aesthetic here that I really like," Veronique Moussu, a member of the

Lille expedition, tells AFP.

"These spaces are enhanced by the play of light, shadows and street art," adds the retiree, who is on her second visit to Charleroi in four years.

The southern city was once a coal-mining hub.

More than 40 years after the last pit shut down, it is now mainly known for its airport a major European hub for low-cost airline Ryanair.

- 'Dead' but attractive -

For the first stop of his tour, Buissart takes the group to an abandoned 1930s swimming and leisure complex that has become a playground for graffiti artists.

Built by a Belgian industrial-

ist, the "Solvay Pool" aimed to provide workers with relaxation and entertainment a stone's throw from a 19th-century manufacturing site for soda ash that is no more.

The pool's old roof no longer holds water; rain and wind rush into the building, and the tiled floor is now an ankle-spraining, cracked mess.

Buissart, 46, a former design student, issues safety instructions as he guides visitors inside, giving them half an hour to explore and snap photos.

The same happens at the second stop on the route, a massive warehouse that was used for treating stainless steel sheets but is now also falling into ruin. □



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Tern season has arrived, and ACF is calling for their protection



(ORANJESTAD)—Aruba has begun to see terns arriving along its coast to start their breeding season once again. An event that happens every year, the migration of terns to our island normally begins in March, but this year it was observed that they were already present as early as January.

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns that normally breed from March to September every year. However, ACF has noted that this year their arrival came earlier, and by the end of January a presence

of terns was already being seen in their breeding areas. During this season, ten different species breed at different times. This is the reason why the season lasts for more than half a year.

The terns breed mainly in the Baby Beach area and along the north coast of Aruba. Baby Beach is a particularly special site for terns, since this is where they carry out their reproduction rituals. Referred to as a “discotheque” by Natasha Silva, the point of Baby Beach near the open water is where a large group of terns spends the

season searching for their partner—for life—to reproduce.

Terns are very fragile and easily disturbed, especially during their reproduction rituals.

Their nests are divided into two specific sites on our island. The first is the reefs near the refinery in San Nicolas. These reefs become home to the terns, where they lay their nests either on the sand or in the small bushes around the reefs. These reefs are “off-limits” to the public; one of the only areas in Aruba that is completely protected by law.

The terns also lay eggs along the north coast of our island, between cliffs and rocks throughout the area. This is where they are vulnerable to greater danger, according to ACF. Among these cliffs, everything is well camouflaged and cannot easily be seen, even by people who are walking or driving vehicles over the rocks.

The chicks have a natu-



ral behavior to “freeze” in place when they sense danger. This puts them at risk of being stepped on. For this reason, ACF is making a call to the community and authorities to help protect our historic birds.

As general advice, ACF says to keep distance and be cautious when passing through areas where terns are breeding. “If a tern starts screaming at you, that is a sign that you are too close to their nest and eggs,” Silva explained. These are the types of signals the Aruba community needs to be aware of.

So once again, a call goes out to the entire community of Aruba: Let’s protect our terns during an important season for them. Educate yourself and others about the birds, stay alert to harmful activities near nests, and share information with ACF if you notice anything unusual in nature. Together we can care for and strengthen our nature, and that begins with education.

Aruba Conservation Foundation (ACF) can be reached by phone at 585-1234 or by email at info@acf.aw

Dining in? Try making some local favorites! How to make “funchi”

(Oranjestad)—One of the most famous Aruban snacks or appetizers is “funchi hasa” (fried polenta sticks), a super easy meal that adults and children will both enjoy. Here’s how to make it!

Before we start, get to know the basics

What is funchi hasa? Funchi, or Aruban polenta, is a popular side dish for local dishes, like soups, stews and fried fish. Made from a corn flour, water and butter mixture, this appetizer is traditionally eaten alongside a warm meal. However, locals also like to fry sticks of funchi for a quick

and filling snack.

Ingredients (measured by heart)

1. Polenta flour/Funchi flour
2. Water
3. Butter
4. Salt to taste

Directions

Bring water to a boil in a medium-sized sauce pan. Add in some salt and butter to taste in the boiling water and let this dissolve and melt. Then, gradually add the flour while stirring with a wooden spoon. The mixture will start to begin to harden pretty fast, so be careful not to add

too much. At this phase of cooking, you want a goopy thick mixture, but thin enough so you can continue to stir to get all the lumps out.

After reaching a semi-firm, yet flexible texture, grab a baking pan or any large, deep plate, and pour the mixture in. Be sure that this plate is wet or greased so that the mixture does not stick to the bottom. Let this cool completely while it firms up for the last time. Once it’s cooled you can enjoy it as is, topped with some butter or shredded cheese. Or, you can take it to another level of deliciousness.



When your funchi is firm enough, cut it into strips (size is up to you). Heat up some oil in a pan and fry those babies up! After frying, you can top it with some cheese or enjoy it with your favorite dipping sauce.

Photo credit of fried funchi sticks: Jacqueline Felida on Pinterest.

Nights of Culture, Music, and Entertainment at Paseo Herencia



(ORANJESTAD)—As the sun sets, Paseo Herencia comes alive with entertainment that celebrates Aruba’s culture, music, and vibrant energy. The open-air plaza transforms into a lively hub where locals and visitors gather to experience the island’s rhythm, sights, and flavors. Evenings at Paseo Herencia invite guests to slow down, connect, and enjoy a mix of music, dance, and immersive experiences in a relaxed, welcoming setting.

This month, we proudly celebrate Dia di Betico, a day honoring the life and legacy of Betico Croes, a key figure in Aruba’s journey toward autonomy. A beloved traditional Aruban band will perform live on January 25th from 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm. Known for their authentic rhythms and lively performances, Grupo di Betico brings a strong sense of cultural pride to the plaza, offering both visitors and residents a memorable evening filled with local heritage and island sounds.

Weekly programming ensures that every night offers something new. Cultural Wednesdays celebrate Aruba’s musical heritage, starting with steelpan music at 7:00 pm and followed by a cultural dance show at 8:00 pm that

highlights traditional movements and storytelling. Saturdays in January are dedicated to Carnival Nights beginning at 8:00 pm, filling Paseo Herencia with dazzling costumes, lively music, and spirited performances that immerse guests in one of Aruba’s most beloved celebrations. The plaza’s entertainment continues with themed nightly water show at 7:30 pm, 8:30 pm, and 9:30 pm, creating a natural transition from live performances into the evening’s activities.

For younger visitors, the carousel and kids’ train provide joyful, memorable experiences that bring a touch of magic to the plaza. Thrill seekers can also enjoy the Airsoft attraction located behind The Lazy Turtle, ensuring that there is entertainment for all ages.

For those continuing the night, Paseo Herencia offers a variety of vibrant nightlife



experiences. Gusto Nightclub is known for high-energy DJ sets, VIP bottle service, and a daily happy hour from 6:00 pm to 10:00 pm. The club brings together locals and visitors for a lively, unforgettable party atmosphere. Frenchie’s Karaoke Bar provides a relaxed outdoor setting where guests can take the stage, sing, and perform while enjoying the support of friendly staff and fellow patrons. Flamingoes Bar offers a social all-ages experience with inventive cocktails, delicious snacks, and a spacious terrace ideal for groups, making it a top choice for music, conversation, and a lively bar vibe.

With stores open daily from 10:00 am to 10:00 pm, visitors can combine shopping, dining, and entertainment into one seamless visit. Parking at Paseo Herencia is complimentary for up to two hours when shopping, dining, or enjoying a movie, simply by presenting a purchase receipt to the parking cashier. Whether visiting for an evening show or staying late into the night, Paseo Herencia offers a complete island experience where music, culture, and entertainment come together to create memorable moments for all ages. □



Fun facts about the “transhi” hedges!

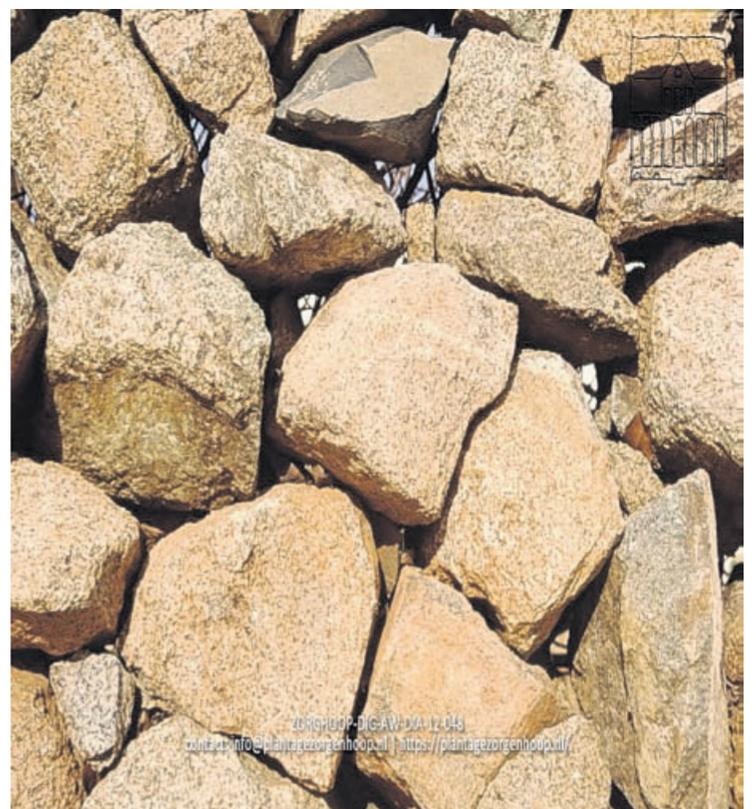
(Oranjestad)—When off-roading, you may encounter some houses that have rock hedges, aligned perfectly and held together by cement—or sometimes nothing at all.

These hedges are called “transhi,” and have a his-

torical and cultural meaning on the island. Used by cunukeros* around the island back when agriculture played a more dominant role in day-to-day life and survival, these stone hedges represent the resilience of our great-grandparents, who had to make

do with what nature gave them.

These stone structures are traditionally placed carefully on top of each other. No cement or other binding mixture was used to hold the structure together. Though not commonly



used for modern homes, the few structures that remain around the island stood the test of time, some completely intact even after decades of rain, wind and urbanization.

Aruba’s unique farming culture—which valued durability, sustainability and resilience.

*cunukero: Aruban farmers. □

These stone hedges are a representation of the

Pictures extracted from the ‘Plantage Zorg en Hoop’ collection on Coleccion.aw

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Easter on Aruba: A tradition of camping

(Oranjestad)—You may notice this week people setting up trailers and tents on the outskirts of beaches around the island. This is a long-standing tradition during Easter weekend, where families and friends gather in large groups and set up camp at the beach.

For this year, camping season starts on March 29 and ends on Sunday April 12. This Aruban tradition may be nothing like what you're used to seeing. Though groups do sleep in tents and spend the entire week at their campsite, most sites have extra facilities. These facilities include trailer-kitchens and portable toilets, making camping much more comfortable—and perhaps even more luxurious.

Though camping in itself is a general custom on the island, each family/group may have their own set of traditions and routines when they go camping, like the Ras family from Paradera.

Before setting up camp, planning starts with procuring (legal) documents. These include camping permits given by the Police Corps (KPA) and contracts for toilet rentals. Do note that camping permits are especially important, because the police are bound to patrol the camping areas during the week. After obtaining a permit, groups assemble to look for and hold a spot at the beach. This is why you may notice some chairs, traffic cones or even ropes stretching across the beaches on Saturday or Sunday before camping week.

Next on the list is planning the menu. The Ras family usually plans hot dogs and burgers for Thursday, and fish for Good Friday. Other than that, soup is a must, chicken and rice (Arroz con pollo) is an Aruban favorite, and for the kids, snacks like pastechi (meat pies), krocket (croquettes), cheese balls, and deviled eggs are necessary to keep them full and energized while they

play all day in the blazing sun. When camping with extended family or friends, usually everyone pitches in with food and drinks. As the Ras family matriarch said: "There always someone in the kitchen cooking something up."

In terms of camp activities, these can also vary from group to group, but one activity you will not miss anywhere is dominos. Usually, every camp site has one or two domino tables ready for use, where the men usually gather and play for hours. Other than that, both children and adults play 'Mens Erger Je Niet' (Ludo), Bingo and other board games, or go fishing with lines and nets. On Easter Sunday, the main activity for everyone, and especially the children, is egg hunting.

The Ras family matriarch told our reporter that the children traditionally decorate their own eggs before these are hidden around the camping site. They make sure to boil



these eggs first, so that no messy accidents happen when painting these. After the kids find their eggs, they are usually cracked open and eaten. But the fun of egg hunting is not exclusive to children; adults may also participate too. For this, the Ras family sometimes hid golden eggs around the area, each holding big prizes, like a bottle of wine, money etc.

Besides this, families on the island may celebrate Easter weekend by walking the "Caminda di Cruz" (Sorrowful Way or Via Dolorosa) to the Alto Vista Chapel located in the northern part of the island or by going to the 3 o'clock church sermon. Some groups that do not go to church but still want

to pay respect on Good Friday may hold a moment of silence when the clock strikes 3pm.

And after two weeks of camping, this tradition comes to a close for the rest of the year. Groups deconstruct their sites and leave the beach premises, excited for next Easter, where they can set up camp again and enjoy the feeling of community on the beaches of Aruba.

As said before, camping during Easter vacation is a long-standing tradition for the community of Aruba. This is something that almost everyone on the island grew up with, and it remains a special occasion that feels authentic and our own! □



What Aruba means to Scott Turner!

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials,

as well as names, likeness, etc. for promotional purposes without compensation.

Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again.

For today we received a lovely message from Scott Turner from Ohio, USA.

He wrote to us saying: "Aruba is Majestic," with a beautiful image of the Aruba's northern coast line taking during his trip from March 19-26.

Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □

The stories of “Compa Nanzi”



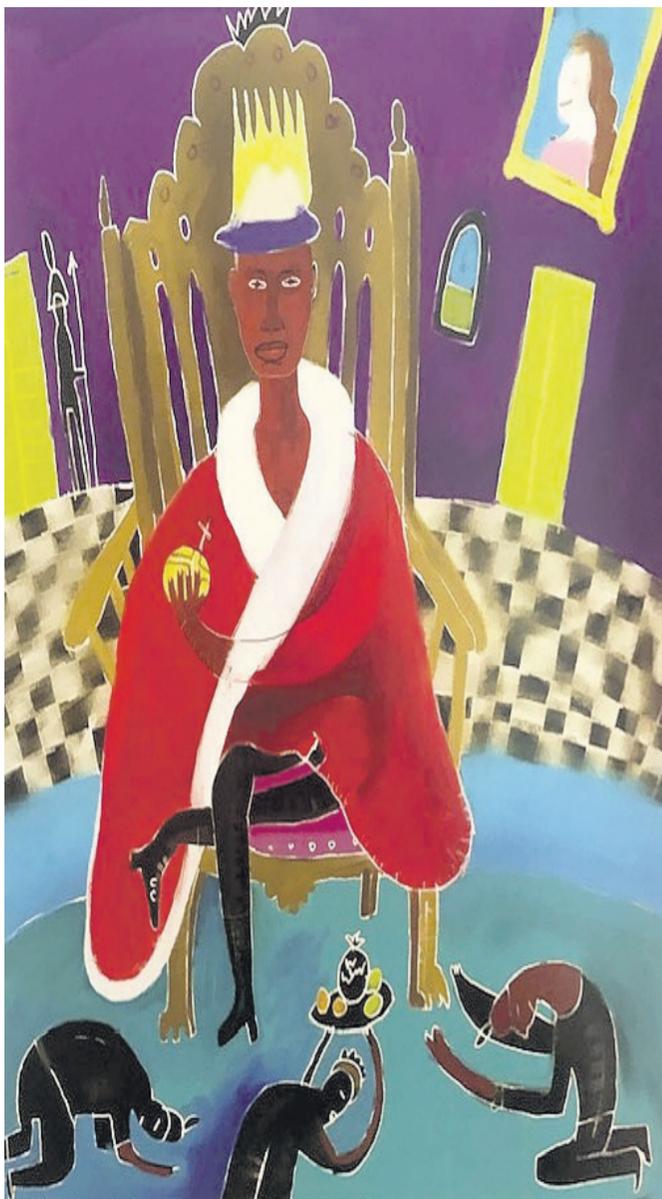
(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king
One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk



right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by?
“Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.

“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick sec-

ond.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what; there are so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's throne and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nék Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.

Aruba's neighborhoods; the meaning behind their names

Just like any other country, Aruba has unique and beautifully named neighborhoods that all form a part of its culture and development. Many of these names have a historical background and meaning that teaches us about the island and its rich culture every day.

With this series, we want to take you on a journey of discovery, where you'll learn not only the beautiful names but the history behind it that gives it life and meaning.

Anabui/Tierra Del Sol

This neighborhood can be seen on Van Raders map and Werbata as Anna Boei. Anna Boei is a name of which there isn't much information about its origin.

The best historians were able to deduce is that this name came to be because of a miscommunication between Van Spengler and the natives who were living on the island. In the Arawak/Taino language one can find the word Anaiboa, which consists of Ana meaning flower or the best and Iboa; the juice of a cassava, which together would mean "the best juice of a cassava".

If one assumes that the actual word heard was Anaboio instead, consisting of Ana meaning the best and Boio (bohio); house, the iteration of Anabui would mean "the best house." This is the origin that has been more or less speculated and assumed



for the word Anabui and its meaning.

During the Second World War and later, this area was used as a terrain for training of shooting by militia and later on Korps Mariniers (the marines of Aruba). By the end of the previous century a large part of Anabui was developed to have luxurious villas and a golf course, which led to it getting the name Tierra Del Sol, Spanish for Land of the Sun. The name is not an official name, but the name of the development

project that took place. It is hoped that the original and 'old' name of Anabui is never lost and now it will be remembered by both locals and tourists.

Angochi

This name can be seen on the Werbata map with little and cursive letters. It is the unofficial name for the area given by a tenant to the land that was rented to him.

The biggest probability that historians believe is that it comes from native

descent, during the time in the 19th century where Mestizos still lived on Aruba. The name can't really be explained and according to books on its history seems to be more of a sign of corruption.

However, it seems to come from combining A(n), which is a generalizing prefix and Goeiza, which means 'the spirit of a living man'. Angochi remains more of a guess.

This neighborhood's abbreviation is; An. □



Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Candelchi!

ORANJESTAD—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Candelchi" (Squirrelfish),

a common, yet shy fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? The Department of

Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, known as Santa Rosa, offers this informative article that illustrates some fish and their names in Papiamentu.

Candelchi, Squirrelfish, Holocentrus adscensionis:

Candelchi actually refers to the entire squirrelfish family or, as some say, when we say candelchi, we mean several different species but without distinguishing them by species. In this picture, we are showing the most common one in our waters, which is called squirrelfish in English or scientifically known as Holocentrus adscensionis.

Under candelchi, we in Aruba generally refer to all the different species of squirrelfish. They all look alike

and it's really difficult to distinguish between them.

The squirrelfish family is distinguished by the following characteristics. They are heart-shaped with pink or red hues and often show heart-shaped streaks between the scales along the body. They have hard fins and are always armed. Over at our sister island Curaçao, they are called "bari di clabo" (nail barrel) for that reason.

In our waters, there are 7 to 8 types or species present and they are sometimes caught and seen occasionally. They can be distinguished by different marks such as color on the dorsal spine or marks on the body.

In Aruba:

Candelchi are found on reefs or areas with structure in the water where they can hide. Although they prefer to hunt for food at night, they are also active during the day. They are edible and delicious when prepared dry and crispy with lime. It is particularly challenging to scale the fish, which is why it is not one of the favorites among fishermen. They often live in groups. □



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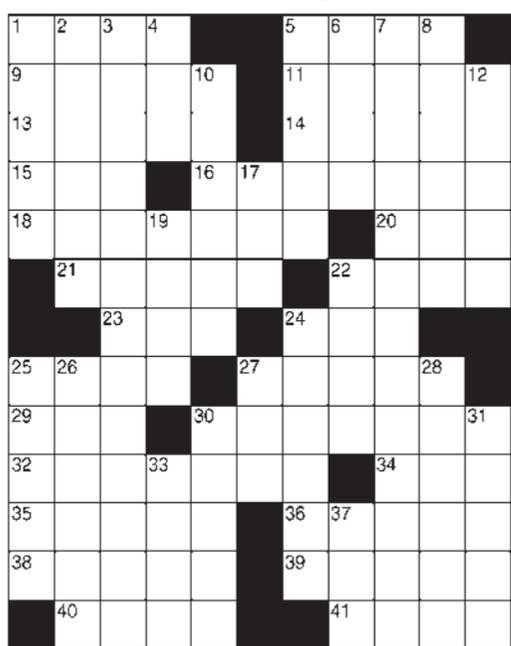
By **THOMAS JOSEPH**



- ACROSS**
- 38 Play part
 - 1 Church offshoot
 - 5 Vegas game
 - 9 License
 - 11 Site of action
 - 13 Davis of "Thelma & Louise"
 - 14 Floor squares
 - 15 Longoria of TV
 - 16 Like Ingrid Bergman
 - 18 Law-making bodies
 - 20 Wide shoe marking
 - 21 Some Picassos
 - 22 Cpl.'s subordinates
 - 23 Knee protector
 - 24 GPS screen
 - 25 Needing aspirin
 - 27 Amber source
 - 29 Greek X
 - 30 Fortify
 - 32 Daily grind
 - 34 Busy one in Apr.
 - 35 Door sign
 - 36 Patriot Allen

- DOWN**
- 1 Wise ones
 - 2 Late hour
 - 3 Fourth in the lineup
 - 4 Great weight
 - 5 Trio of myth
 - 6 Parched
 - 7 Ace's replacement
 - 8 "Just a moment"
 - 10 Frittered away
 - 12 Arson yield
 - 17 Director Anderson
 - 19 Call it —
 - 22 Go by
 - 24 Brawls
 - 25 Farm units
 - 26 Probability
 - 27 Bird of myth
 - 28 Kathmandu native
 - 30 Uncovers
 - 31 Talks crazily
 - 33 Nevada city
 - 37 "I don't need the details," for short

- 13 Davis of "Thelma & Louise"
- 14 Floor squares
- 15 Longoria of TV
- 16 Like Ingrid Bergman
- 18 Law-making bodies
- 20 Wide shoe marking
- 21 Some Picassos
- 22 Cpl.'s subordinates
- 23 Knee protector
- 24 GPS screen
- 25 Needing aspirin
- 27 Amber source
- 29 Greek X
- 30 Fortify
- 32 Daily grind
- 34 Busy one in Apr.
- 35 Door sign
- 36 Patriot Allen



4-14

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.

4-14 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

K M F Q S H O U U K U N X Q U L E U
M V B K B H A E L H J V M S
Y Q M W U P L H V A F H N E U O
R M V N L U B B X L H M V N . — C X I B M
V U Q F O X

Cryptoquote: WHOEVER IS HAPPY WILL MAKE OTHERS HAPPY TOO. — ANNE FRANK

Cruise ship Schedule: March 23 - 31 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	23	MARELLA DISCOVERY 2	08.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	24	NORWEGIAN SKY OASIS OF THE SEAS	13.30 08.00	22.30 23.00	C I	1 1
WED	25	SERENADE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL VISTA	08.00 13.00	23.00 23.00	B C	1 1
FRI	27	REGAL PRINCESS	09.00	22.00	C	1
MON	30	EXPLORA II	09.00	18.00	C	1
TUE	31	CARNIVAL HORIZON AIDABLU NORWEGIAN SKY FREEWINDS	08.00 11.30 13.30 09.30	22.00 22.00 22.30 ****	B C I E	1 1 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

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

Difficulty: ★★

3/31

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★

3/30

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Celine Dion announces comeback following health struggle

Paris, France

Megastar singer Celine Dion on Monday announced her return to performing after a lengthy break prompted by a rare health condition, calling the comeback news revealed on her birthday "the best gift".



A grab of a video released by the Olympic Broadcasting Services shows Canadian Singer Celine Dion performing on the Eiffel Tower during the opening ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, in Paris, on July 26, 2024.

Addressing fans in a video released on social media, the 58-year-old Canadian said her condition had improved and she would perform a series of shows in Paris beginning in September. "This year, I'm getting the best birthday gift of my life. I'm getting the chance to see you, to perform for you once again," she said. "I want to let you know that I'm doing great, managing my health, feeling good." Dion first disclosed in December 2022 that she had been diagnosed with Stiff Person Syndrome, an incurable autoimmune disorder. The Quebec-born star was forced to cancel the remainder of her shows indefinitely.

tion, including suffering a seizure.

Despite the diagnosis, Dion vowed she would fight her way back to the stage. "I'm not dead," the singer told AFP in 2024 on the red carpet ahead of the premiere of the documentary. Later that year Dion sang from the Eiffel Tower for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games opening ceremony, while athletes sailed down the river in pouring rain.

- Singing again -

Dion was launched onto the global stage in 1988 representing Switzerland at the Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin. Then aged 20, she sang "Ne partez pas sans moi" (Don't Leave Without Me), which won her the prize. □

Treatment can help alleviate symptoms of the condition that can cause stiff muscles in the torso, arms and legs.

The 2024 documentary "I Am: Celine Dion" provided an intimate look at the charismatic performer's career and the severity of her pain from the condi-

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AI agent future is coming, OpenClaw creator tells AFP

Tokyo, Japan

Peter Steinberger's artificial intelligence agent tool OpenClaw has taken the tech world by storm with its ability to execute real-life tasks such as checking him in for his flight to Tokyo.

AI is not yet a ubiquitous personal assistant for ordinary people, but "you'll see much more of that this year because this is the year of agents", Steinberger told AFP in the Japanese capital on Monday.

"There are still some things we need to do to make it better," the Austrian programmer said.

Demand is ramping up, however, with more developers now "making the future happen", he added in an interview during a gathering for OpenClaw enthusiasts.

When downloaded, OpenClaw can be connected to existing AI models and given simple instructions through instant messaging apps, as if to a friend or colleague.

Jensen Huang, head of the world's most valuable company Nvidia, this month hailed the tool whose symbol is a bright red lobster as "the next ChatGPT".

But all the buzz has raised concerns over the cyberse-



People wait to install StepClaw, an AI assistant built on OpenClaw, at the Global Developer Pioneers Summit (GDPS) in Shanghai on March 27, 2026.

curity risks of allowing AI systems vulnerable to hacks to access personal data such as bank details.

- Chinese 'momentum' -

Steinberger built OpenClaw in November while playing around with AI coding tools in an attempt to organise his digital life.

He has since been hired by ChatGPT creator OpenAI "to drive the next generation of personal agents", the U.S. startup's boss Sam

Altman said in February.

"What you have to know about OpenClaw is, like, it couldn't have come from those big companies," Steinberger told AFP.

"Those companies would have worried too much about what could go wrong instead of just, like I wanted to just show people I've been into the future," he said.

While tech giants work out how agent tools could be

used by businesses, the next AI innovation could come from "someone who just wants to have fun", Steinberger said.

At Monday's "ClawCon" event in Tokyo, where many of the hundreds of participants were dressed as lobsters, OpenClaw demos were held on stage and experts helped attendees install their agents.

Similar scenes have been seen across China, where users have been particu-

larly quick to embrace OpenClaw's potential to organise emails, help with coding and a plethora of other digital tasks.

"If you see it as a competition, it certainly looks like China is gaining a lot of momentum" in the AI sector, Steinberger said.

"But right now there's still quite a bit of a leap between the best models from China and the best models in the U.S."

- AI 'hammer' -

OpenClaw's success in China has led national cybersecurity authorities and Beijing's IT ministry to issue official warnings over potential risks.

Is Steinberger concerned that people could use his tool for illicit purposes?

"Yes, I do worry a bit, especially because there's now a whole cottage industry of companies that try to make a big buck and make it even simpler to install OpenClaw," he said.

"I purposefully didn't make it simpler so people would stop and read and understand: what is AI, that AI can make mistakes, what is prompt injection some basics that you really should understand when you use that technology." □

French AI firm Mistral borrows \$830m for data centre

Paris, France

French generative artificial intelligence champion Mistral said Monday it had raised \$830 million to build a data centre outside Paris stuffed with the latest computing hardware.

The scale of the investment a tiny fraction of the hundreds of billions announced across the Atlantic illustrates Mistral's divergent path compared with its giant American AI and cloud computing rivals.

Mistral was building to answer "surging and sustained demand from governments, enterprises and research institutions seeking to build their own customised AI environment, rather than depend on third-party cloud provid-

ers", chief executive Arthur Mensch said in a statement.

The data centre at Bruyeres-le-Chatel, southwest of Paris, is "set to become operational in Q2 2026",

hosting almost 14,000 of AI chip behemoth Nvidia's GB300 graphics processing units.

The site had already been announced at the Paris AI summit held early last year.



This photograph shows screens displaying the logo of the French artificial intelligence Mistral AI company, and a binary code in the background, in Toulouse, southwestern France, on September 9, 2025.

France has trumpeted itself as an ideal host for power- and land-hungry AI data centres, with its ample nuclear generation and multiple sites picked out by the government as "turnkey" locations ready for immediate construction.

With Brussels and Washington often at odds since Donald Trump returned to the White House, European nations are also pushing to host more "sovereign" computing infrastructure on their own soil rather than rely on mostly American providers.

Beyond France, Mistral has also announced a 1.2-billion-euro (\$1.4 billion) investment in a Swedish data centre project.

The French firm said Monday that it aims to operate computing capacity consuming a total of 200 megawatts of electric power "by the end of 2027".

At American AI developers like OpenAI, or so-called "hyperscaler" cloud operators like Microsoft and Google, power ambitions more commonly run into the gigawatts as they build the hardware to train and operate general-purpose AI systems.

But the tech giants have run into challenges building new data centres at the pace of their aspirations, with some projects delayed or shrunk compared to the initial announcements. □

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Jalen Brunson #11 of the New York Knicks protects the ball from Shai Gilgeous-Alexander #2 of the Oklahoma City Thunder during the first half at Paycom Center on March 29, 2026 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

NBA-best Thunder beat Knicks as Boston seal playoff spot

New York, United States
Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 30 points and the NBA-best Oklahoma City Thunder beat the New York Knicks 111-100 on Sunday while the Boston Celtics clinched a playoff berth.

Jalen Williams added 22 points while Isaiah Hartenstein grabbed 13 rebounds as the reigning NBA champion Thunder improved to 59-16, 2.5 games ahead of San Antonio atop the Western Conference. Reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Gilgeous-Alexander extended his NBA record run of games with 20 or more points to 135 in a row. "He's MVP for a reason," Thunder guard Luguentz Dort said of "SGA". "He knows the type of shot he's going to get and he's never going to lay down and we know he's always going to be aggressive for us, which he did throughout the whole game."

The visiting Knicks, led by 32 points from Jalen Brunson, fell to 48-27 and missed a chance to clinch a playoff berth.

Josh Hart's three-pointer at the buzzer lifted New York within 53-52 at half-time, but the Thunder stretched the advantage to 84-78 after three quarters. A 10-0 run pulled New York within 92-91 but Gilgeous-Alexander made back-to-back three-pointers and a jumper in an 10-0 run soon after that gave the Thunder a 106-95 edge on the way to a 14th victory in 15 games. "They're a good team. We knew it was going to be a tough one," said Dort, who scored 12 points. "We just had to stay in there throughout the whole game and we did. "Every time we play together like that we're hard to beat." Jayson Tatum delivered 32 points, eight assists and

five rebounds as the Boston Celtics sealed a playoff berth with a 114-99 victory at Charlotte. Payton Pritchard added 28 points for Boston (50-24), which pulled within four games of Eastern Conference leader Detroit.

The Los Angeles Clippers (39-36) stretched their win streak to five games as reserve Bennedict Mathurin scored 28 points and Kawhi Leonard added 20 in a 127-113 victory at Milwaukee, which got 36 points from Gary Trent in a losing cause.

Houston's Alperen Sengun had 36 points and 14 rebounds while Kevin Durant added 20 points to spark the Rockets in a 134-102 victory at New Orleans. Cameroon's Pascal Siakam had 30 points, 11 rebounds and six assists to lead the league-worst Indiana Pacers (17-58) over visiting Miami 135-118. □



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen takes off his earpiece in the pits during the qualifying session ahead of the Formula One Japanese Grand Prix at the Suzuka circuit in Suzuka, Mie prefecture on March 28, 2026.

Despondent Verstappen questions Formula One future

Suzuka, Japan

Four-time world champion Max Verstappen suggested he could quit Formula One at the end of the season after enduring another frustrating race on Sunday in Japan.

The Red Bull driver finished eighth in Suzuka, ending his four-year reign as Japanese Grand Prix champion in ruthless fashion.

He told the BBC that he was "not enjoying the whole formula behind" this season's championship, which has brought in sweeping new regulations.

"You just think about, is it worth it?" he said. "Or do I enjoy being more at home with my family? Seeing my friends more when you're not enjoying your sport?"

Verstappen has repeatedly railed against the new regulations, that see a 50-50 split between conventional and electrical power.

He labelled his car "undriveable" after qualifying in a lowly 11th for the Japan race.

When asked if he could walk away from the sport, he replied that he was "thinking about everything inside this paddock".

"It's really anti-driving. Then at one point, yeah, it's just not what I want to do," he said.

"And of course you can look at it and make a lot of money. Great.

"But at the end of the day it's not about money any more because this has always been my passion."

Verstappen sought a change of scenery by competing in a four-hour race in Germany before the Japanese Grand Prix. He will not compete again in F1 until the Miami Grand Prix on May 3, after the Bahrain and Saudi Arabia races scheduled for April were cancelled because of the war in the Middle East. □



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Implacable Sinner overpowers Lehecka to win Miami Open

Miami, United States

World number two Jannik Sinner powered past Jiri Lehecka 6-4, 6-4 to win the ATP Miami Masters 1000 for a second time on Sunday, adding the title to his Indian Wells crown.

Sinner had to wait out rain delays before and during the match to complete his "Sunshine Double," becoming the first man to sweep the elite hard court tournaments in California and Florida since Roger Federer in 2017 and the first to do so without dropping a set. In fact, Sinner who won Miami in 2024 but missed last year as he served a three-month doping ban -- has now won three straight Masters 1000 events, starting with a victory in Paris last year.

"It's a very, very special moment," Sinner said. "Coming here, performing again in a very good way after Indian Wells means a lot to me. "It's something I never would've thought (I'd win) because it's difficult to achieve."



Jannik Sinner of Italy poses with team after defeating Jiri Lehecka of Czechia during the Men's Singles Final of the Miami Open Presented by Itau at Hard Rock Stadium on March 29, 2026 in Miami Gardens, Florida.

Sinner's victory, coupled with Aryna Sabalenka's triumph over Coco Gauff on Saturday, mark the first time the Indian Wells-Miami sweep was achieved on both the men's and women's sides since Novak Djokovic and Victoria Azarenka both did it in 2016.

It also saw the Italian gain a bit on Spain's Carlos Alcaraz who was upset in the third round in the race for world number one as the clay court season beckons.

Early showers saw the match delayed for more than an hour. Sinner had just pocketed the first set when the

showers hit again, halting the match for 90 minutes. It wasn't enough to unsettle Sinner, who fired 10 aces and won 33 of 36 points when he put his first serve in play.

His return game was also spot on as he handed 22nd-ranked Czech Lehecka his first service break of the tour-

namment for a 2-1 lead in the opening frame. Sinner trailed 0-40 in the following game but fired three service winners and a pair of aces to hold.

"I tried to be focused," Sinner said. "I tried to understand why I missed the first serves before. In the beginning, the conditions were very different ... very, very heavy balls. I missed a couple of first serves in the net because they were quite heavy."

- 'Very precise' -

He said Lehecka's aggressive return game also gave him pause.

"You have to hit very precise. If not, he has it on the racquet," Sinner said.

But he made the advantage stand up and gave himself a first set point in the ninth game with a blistering cross-court forehand service return winner.

Lehecka saved that one with a service winner and saved another set point with a volley, going on to seal the hold on his sixth game point before Sinner pocketed the set with a love game. □



Albert Korir of Kenya crosses the finish line of the Professional Men's Open Division during the 2025 TCS New York City Marathon on November 02, 2025 in New York City.

Kenya's former NY marathon champion Korir gets 5-year doping ban

Nairobi, Kenya

Kenya's 2021 New York marathon champion Albert Korir has been banned for five years after he admitted using a banned performance-enhancing drug, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) said on Monday.

Korir, 32, tested positive for the synthetic form of erythropoietin (EPO) that stimulates red blood cell production during out-of-competition tests in Kenya in October 2025. The AIU said that Korir had received a one-year reduction from the original six-year suspension "based on an early admission and acceptance of the sanction".

His five-year ban will run from January 8, 2026, the date he was provisionally suspended, until January 7, 2031.

Korir won the 2021 New York marathon in a time of 2hr 08min 22sec and came third in 2023 with a personal best time of 2:06:57.

He won the Ottawa marathon in 2019 and 2025.

Korir's sanction comes nearly six months after compatriot

Ruth Chepngetich, the current world marathon record holder was banned for three years after admitting the use of Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ), a banned diuretic used as a masking agent.

Running is a way out of poverty for many in Kenya, putting pressure on many to turn to drugs, especially since the country lacks the sophisticated infrastructure to train stars.

Kenya worked to clean up its image after a string of doping scandals around the 2016 Rio Olympics led to it being declared non-compliant by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA).

More than 140 Kenyan runners, mainly long-distance athletes, have been sanctioned for drugs offences since then.

In June 2024, Kenya handed out its first lifetime ban to marathon runner Beatrice Toroitich and a six-year ban to 10km record-holder Rhonex Kipruto. □