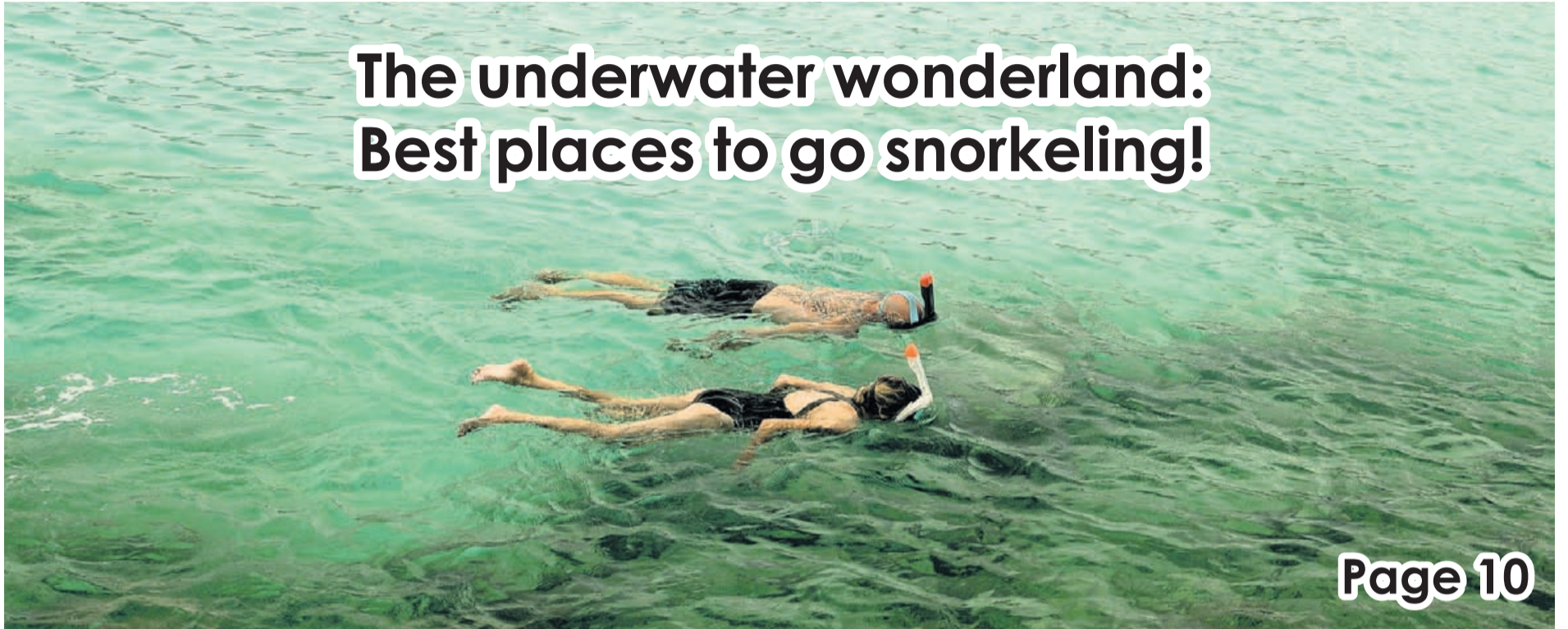




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Beyond the Screen: How school phone bans are fueling a literacy renaissance

LOUISVILLE, KY —

For the better part of a decade, the typical American high school hallway during passing periods or lunch was a study in digital isolation. The traditional cacophony of teenage life had been replaced by a ghostly silence, broken only by the mechanical hum of lockers and the soft, rhythmic tapping of thumbs on glass. Students moved in “digital bubbles,” their attention tethered to TikTok algorithms and group chats.

However, at Ballard High School in Kentucky, a different sound has returned this year: the audible rustle of turning pages, the scraping of chairs as students huddle over shared texts, and a lively, decibel-shattering hum of students actually talking to one another.

Following a strict “bell-to-bell” cellphone ban implemented for the 2025-2026 school year, schools in the Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) district are reporting a stunning and largely unforeseen side effect: a massive surge in student literacy and library engagement. It appears that when the digital world is stripped away, students are hungry for a different kind of connection one



Mark Twain Middle School Principal Matthew Mough speaks during an interview about the school's smartphone ban in Alexandria, Virginia, on March 6, 2025, while holding the locking YONDR pouch for cell phones and magnetic unlocking base kept by the school's administrators.

found in the stacks of their school libraries.

The “Ballard effect”

At Ballard High School, the transformation was almost immediate. Within the first month of the ban, library book checkouts skyrocketed by 67% compared to the same period the previous year. In August 2025 alone, students borrowed 891 books, up from 533 the year before. This isn't just a minor statistical blip; it represents a fundamental shift

in how students occupy their downtime.

“They weren't talking to me about books before because their heads were always down,” said Stephanie Conrad, Ballard's veteran librarian. “Now, I'm having those deep, meaningful conversations again about genres they like, authors they've discovered on their own, or recommendations for their friends. It's like they've rediscovered the library as a destination rather than just a place to

charge their phones.”

The trend isn't isolated to a single campus. Across the district, the numbers tell a consistent story of a “literacy renaissance” born out of boredom and the need for engagement:

Waggener High School: Recorded 1,069 checkouts in August, a staggering jump from just 232 the previous year. Central High School: Saw 857 checkouts, more than doubling its previous August total of 341.

Butler High School: Reported that 40% of its entire student body currently has a book checked out double the engagement rate of the entire previous school year combined.

A growing national movement

The success in Kentucky arrives as a massive policy shift sweeps across the United States. As of early 2026, nearly 37 states have passed laws or issued formal guidance requiring districts to curb phone usage to combat “digital distraction” and rising rates of cyberbullying. According to the latest data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), roughly 77% of U.S. public schools now prohibit non-academic phone use during school hours.

The push for these policies gained momentum after a series of alarming reports. Last year, 53% of school leaders reported that mobile devices were actively harming academic performance and contributing to a “crisis of attention.” While the initial goal was simply to improve focus in the classroom, the extracurricular benefits specifically in reading have caught many educators by surprise. □

Uber adds hotel booking in push to become ‘everything app’

New York, United States

Uber on Wednesday unveiled a new feature allowing users to book a hotel room directly from its app, the latest step in its push to become a one-stop shop for everyday needs.

The company had already broadened its ambitions in 2014 with the launch of Uber Eats, which started as a food delivery service before expanding into wider shopping, from cosmetics to electronics.

The San Francisco-based company will now let users book hotel rooms through the app via a partnership with travel site Expedia, which lists more than 700,000 properties. The tie-

up also envisions eventually adding short-term rentals from the Vrbo platform.

The hotel booking tool works much like other trav-

el sites, with search, maps, and filters for price, amenities, and guest ratings. Users can pay with card details already saved in the app.



The Uber company logo is seen in the Falchi Building on June 26, 2024 in New York City.

“We're no longer just an app for rides, or even two apps, or family of apps for both rides and eats. Uber is now an app for everything,” chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi said at a presentation on Wednesday in New York.

“Together, we can reduce the number of steps, we can save people time and money,” Expedia chief Ariane Gorin added.

The move reflects a broader trend toward apps that handle many aspects of daily life -- a model long established in China, where platforms like WeChat and Alipay bundle together payments, bookings, mes-

saging, and much more.

Rival Airbnb has been on a similar path. The home-rental company introduced bookable local activities back in 2016 and last summer added on-demand personal services such as haircuts and massages, while also launching its own ride-hailing option.

Elon Musk has outlined similar ambitions for X, the social network formerly known as Twitter, and has said a banking feature is on the way.

On the AI front, Uber said users will soon be able to ask the app to plan a week of meals, generate a shopping list, and arrange delivery -- all in one go. □

The flourishing hearth: How micro-bakeries are kneading communities together

FORT MILL, SC —

In the quiet hours of 3:00 a.m., while the rest of the neighborhood sleeps, Marcelle Malkin's basement is alive with the rhythmic slapping of dough against flour-dusted counters. The air is thick with the earthy, tangy scent of fermenting sourdough.

For Malkin, the founder of Fort Mill Sourdough Co., this isn't just a side hobby—it's a thriving enterprise that has become a cornerstone of her local community.

Malkin is part of a "micro-bakery" revolution sweeping the United States. As of early 2026, these home-based businesses are no longer just pandemic-era experiments; they have matured into a sophisticated industry that is reshaping local economies and redefining the American dream for thousands of families.

From Passion to Purpose

The story of Fort Mill Sourdough began with a personal need. When Malkin's middle child struggled with severe eczema, she sought a healthier, gut-friendly alternative to mass-produced bread. Naturally fermented sourdough, with its lower gluten content and absence of additives, was the answer.

What started as a way



Marcelle Malkin

to nourish her own family quickly caught the attention of neighbors.

Today, Malkin's basement operation produces over 400 loaves a week, distributed across 11 retail locations in the Charlotte, N.C. metro area. Her suc-

cess has allowed her to hire five part-time employees and, as of late 2025, transition to a four-day baking schedule to prioritize homeschooling her children.

"It's about more than bread," Malkin shared in a recent community update.

"It's a way of life that lets me be present for my family while providing something wholesome for my neighbors".

The 2026 "Cottage Food" Revolution

The explosion of micro-bakeries is not accidental. It is fueled by a massive wave of legislative reform across the country. In 2025 alone, 36 bills were introduced in 21 states to expand "food freedom".

Texas: As of late 2025, new laws allow home bakers to sell refrigerated goods and hot foods, effectively turning home kitchens into neighborhood bistros.

Michigan & Georgia: Recent 2026 legislation has either raised or entirely removed sales caps, allowing home entrepreneurs to scale their businesses to six-figure revenues without the crushing overhead of commercial real estate.

Florida: New "food freedom" bills passed in March 2026 allow vendors to sell a wider variety of prepared goods, including certain meat products and produce, directly to consumers.

These legal shifts have broken the "refrigeration barrier," allowing micro-bakers to move beyond simple bread into artisanal pas-

tries, cheesecakes, and savory bakes that were previously off-limits in a home setting.

A Community-Supported Ecosystem

For consumers, the draw of the micro-bakery is twofold: transparency and connection. In an era of ultra-processed foods, many are turning to "better-for-you" artisanal breads made with heritage grains and local ingredients.

This has given rise to the Community Supported Bakery (CSB) model. Much like a farm share (CSA), local residents pay a monthly subscription fee in exchange for weekly loaves. This provides bakers with a reliable income and ensures zero waste, as every loaf is spoken for before it even enters the oven.

The impact is visible in neighborhood "drop spots" and farmers' markets, where the arrival of a bread delivery often sparks social gatherings. "Small and local is our biggest advantage," says Jess Stewart of Micro Bakery School, who has helped thousands of women launch their own home businesses. "We aren't just selling a product; we're building a presence".

The 'Gardens of Grace': How an inner-city lot became a neighborhood oasis

DETROIT, MICHIGAN — For nearly two decades, the corner of Cass and Ledyard was nothing more than an eyesore—a vacant, trash-strewn lot that stood as a symbol of urban decay. But this spring, that same corner is a riot of color, scent, and life. It is now the "Gardens of Grace," an urban farm and community space that is feeding more than just the bodies of Detroit's residents.

The transformation was spearheaded by 24-year-old Jada Williams, who grew up three blocks away. Tired of seeing her

neighborhood defined by its empty spaces, Jada gathered a small group of volunteers and spent a year clearing debris, testing soil, and petitioning the city for the right to transform the land.

"I wanted to create something that looked like the way we felt inside—resilient, vibrant, and growing," Jada says, standing amidst rows of ripening tomatoes and blooming marigolds. "This isn't just about vegetables. It's about taking back our narrative."

The Gardens of Grace operates on a "take what you

need, give what you can" model. Residents are encouraged to harvest fresh produce for their families, and in return, many spend their Saturday mornings weeding, watering, or teaching younger kids about the environment. The garden has become a vital source of fresh food in an area often classified as a "food desert."

Beyond the nutrition, the garden has significantly impacted local safety and social cohesion. According to local precinct data, calls for service in the immediate two-block radius

have dropped by nearly 25% since the garden opened. "Criminals don't like bright, well-cared-for

spaces where people are always watching and talking to each other," says Officer Mark Peterson.



Troubled waters: Jakarta battles deadly, invasive suckerfish

Jakarta, Indonesia

Mounds of slimy carcasses pile up on a riverbank in Jakarta where authorities are fighting an uphill battle against a fast-breeding invasive fish flourishing in Java island's heavily polluted waterways.

The sapu-sapu, a sucking fish introduced from South America decades ago to keep Southeast Asian aquariums algae-free, has made a home in Javan rivers, many after being thrown out for outgrowing their tanks.

Unlike in the Amazon River where it has natural predators, the sapu-sapu quickly took over in Java, outbreeding indigenous freshwater fish, eating their eggs and outcompeting them for food.

Residents and campaigners have complained about the stinky, unsightly pileups of fishy remains, and the potential health risk for those who consume snacks made from polluted sapu-sapu stock.

Invasive species are spreading ever faster across the globe and cost well over \$400 billion a year in damages and lost income, according to a 2023 United Nations assessment.



In this photo taken on May 5, 2026 a suckermouth catfish lies upside down showing its sucker mouth after being caught from a river as part of a local government program to eradicate the invasive species in Jakarta.

Surprisingly adept at living in polluted water, the sapu-sapu also known as suckermouth catfish, janitor fish or pleco can grow to half a metre (20 inches) in length and a female can lay thousands of eggs every year. "That there are thousands of (sapu-sapu) fish in some of these river bodies, where, you know, the rivers are like dark black, almost smelling like rotten eggs... is completely crazy," clean

river campaigner Gary Benchehib told AFP. Killing sapu-sapu is not addressing the real problem, he added in a phone interview, nearly halfway through a 1,200-kilometre (746-mile) run from Bali to Jakarta to raise money for river cleanups and having witnessed the crisis at several stops along the way. The real solution is cleaning up "the waste it lives off... that you find in these

polluted waters," said Benchehib, co-founder of the Sungai Watch NGO.

- 'A dangerous snack' -

More than half of Indonesia's rivers are heavily polluted, and two of the country's major river systems are among the dirtiest in the world, according to data from the UN Environment Programme.

Nationwide, only about 7.4 percent of municipal

wastewater is safely collected and treated.

Greater Jakarta, a water-stressed metropolis of 42 million people, is particularly affected.

But sapu-sapu are able to live in oxygen-poor and polluted waters, digging holes into riverbanks to lay their eggs and weakening walls that have been known to collapse as a result.

In recent weeks, Jakarta has embarked on a killing campaign involving residents, sanitation workers, fisheries ministry workers and even soldiers.

In two weeks, about 5.3 tonnes of the fish have been removed from rivers in South Jakarta alone, mayor Muhammad Anwar told AFP while overseeing an operation at Babakan Lake this week.

The sapu-sapu are caught in nets, separated from indigenous fish that are thrown back, then decapitated to make sure they are dead, and buried in mass graves.

Some activists have criticised the procedure as wasteful, arguing the skin could be used for fish leather products and the rest processed into fertiliser or animal feed. □

Ghana artist's billboard campaign takes aim at fast fashion fallout

Accra, Ghana

On a busy roadside in Accra, a billboard that would normally advertise soft drinks is draped in a cascade of worn shirts -- frayed collars, faded blues and greys and a striking circular pattern stitched at its centre.

Below, traffic slows as drivers crane their necks and pedestrians stop to look up, some asking questions.

For Ghanaian artist Emmanuel Aggrey Tiekou, that pause is the point.

His project, "Baleboard", replaces advertising with textile waste, confronting passers-by with the scale of fast fashion's footprint in a country that receives an estimated 15 million second-hand garments each week, many of which end up unsold in markets or

dumped into landfills and waterways.

"We use the billboard to sell reality," Tiekou told AFP. "If you don't see waste, it stays out of mind. This brings it back into view."

Ghana is one of Africa's largest importers of used clothing and the overflow

an estimated 40 percent deemed unsellable clogs drains and pollutes beach lagoons.

At the latest installation, in Accra's Madina suburb, five workers hoisted pre-stitched panels of discarded clothing onto the towering metal frame of a

billboard, releasing them from above so they fell into place like a patchwork curtain, layers of fabric rippling in the wind.

A taxi driver initially mistook the display for a clothing giveaway.

A bus conductor, who gave his name as John Kofi Sackey, said he had seen earlier installations elsewhere in the city but "never understood" them, until the team explained the message.

Motorist Samuel Yeboah Ofori reacted more sharply. Angered after learning about the volume of waste, he called for stricter controls on second-hand imports known locally as "obroni wawu", or "dead white man's clothes".

Working between Accra and Paris, Tiekou, 31, has

spent years transforming discarded textiles into large-scale installations.

But "Baleboard" named after the bales of bundled second-hand clothes shipped to the country marks a shift in both scale and audience.

"Galleries keep conversations inside," he said. "The billboard lets them breathe outside."

From Europe to Africa, he argued, consumers are disconnected from fast fashion's supply chains and consequences.

"Places like Paris generate the waste, but here is where you feel the weight," he said.

"Baleboard" is planned as a long-term, travelling exhibition spanning multiple countries, including Nigeria and Kenya, before moving to European cities. □



Ghana's artist Emmanuel Aggrey poses for a photograph next to a billboard covered with clothes as part of the "Baleboard" project in Accra on 5 May 2026.

Bali drowning in trash after landfill closed

Denpasar, Indonesia

Buckets of blooms adorn Yuvita Anggi Prinanda's sidewalk flower stall in Bali, but their perfume can't mask the stench of accumulating trash bespoiling parts of the resort island famed for its natural beauty.

Bali's largest landfill was declared off-limits for organic waste from the beginning of April, as the government moves to enforce a long-standing ban on open tips. But with no immediate alternatives provided, trash is piling up in the streets and attracting rats, or being set alight by frustrated residents, causing acrid smoke that has prompted health concerns.

"As a business owner, this is a real nuisance," Yuvita told AFP.

She has dipped into her meagre profits to pay a private company to remove the trash from near her stall. "Some customers, perhaps bothered by the smell, ended up not making a purchase," the 34-year-old told AFP.

Her shop alone generates about four large black bags full of waste every day, mostly leaves and flower cuttings -- adding to the island's estimated 3,400 tons of daily garbage output.

On paper, Indonesia has banned open landfills since 2013, but it is only now attempting to fully implement



This picture taken on April 21, 2026 shows motorists driving past rubbish dumped along a street at Serangan village in Denpasar, on Indonesia's resort island of Bali.

the measure.

- 'Not a good look' -

At Kuta beach, a popular tourist spot regularly inundated with plastic debris that washes ashore, rubbish bags are piled up waist-high in a parking lot.

"You have many rats here at nighttime. The smell is not very good... it's not a good look," said Australian visitor Justin Butcher.

Around seven million tourists visited Bali last year, vastly outstripping the island's native population of around 4.4 million, and contributing to Bali's waste output.

People caught dumping or burning trash risk up to

three months' jail time and a 50-million rupiah (nearly \$3,000) fine, according to I Dewa Nyoman Rai Dharmadi, the head of Bali's public order agency, but many feel they have no other choice.

On April 16, hundreds of sanitation workers drove waste-filled trucks to the governor's office in protest. "If we don't collect our client's trash, we are in the wrong, if we collect it, where do we dispose it?" said protester I Wayan Tedi Brahmanca.

In response, the local government said it would allow limited disposal of waste at Suwung as a temporary

measure until the end of July.

But from August, the government has vowed to end all open landfills nationwide, though it is unclear what alternatives will be in place by then.

- 'People need guidance' -

Nur Azizah, a waste management expert at Gadjah Mada University, told AFP the Suwung landfill received about 1,000 tons of waste per day and has been overcapacity for years.

Up to 70 percent is organic waste that "is dangerous because over time it generates methane, which

could explode and cause landslides".

This has happened several times, including a March collapse at Indonesia's largest landfill outside Jakarta that buried trucks and food stalls, killing seven people.

Nur said the only long-term solution was a mass campaign to educate people on managing organic waste, mainly through composting.

Yuvita agreed.

"People need guidance. It's like when someone cannot swim, they shouldn't be told to jump right in," she said. The head of Denpasar's environment and forestry agency Ida Bagus Wirabawa told AFP the government has been running awareness campaigns since last year, and handing out composting containers.

Indonesia's 284 million people produce more than 40 million tons of rubbish per year, nearly 40 percent of it food waste and nearly a fifth plastic, according to the environment ministry.

Only about a third gets "managed", meaning recycled or processed, according to Nur.

The rest ends up in nature.

Fewer than a third of the country's 485 landfills have shuttered since the ban on open dumping came into force on paper about 13 years ago. □

Spain logs hottest April on record

Madrid, Spain

Spain logged its hottest April since records began in 1961 with an average temperature of 15.1C last month, national weather agency AEMET said.

The previous record was set in 2023 at 15C, the agency said in a social media post late on Monday.

Spain is considered a frontline region for climate change, experiencing increasingly long heatwaves that sometimes start before summer, along with more frequent episodes of intense rainfall.

AEMET described April as "extremely warm", noting it was 3.2C above the 1991-2020 average. Six days in April set new daily heat records, it added.

Spain experienced multiple wildfires in April, mainly in the north, linked to dry

weather and unusually warm temperatures.

The warm April followed Spain's wettest January and February in 47 years.

Eleven major storms swept the country from late December to mid-February, bringing heavy rain and strong winds.

Spain sweltered through its hottest summer on record last year, with an average temperature of 24.2C.

Europe and the rest of the world could face another extremely hot summer as the El Nino weather phenomenon, which pushed global temperatures to record highs in 2024, is expected to return in the middle of the year.

Scientists have repeatedly warned that human-driven climate change is resulting in more frequent and intense extreme weather events worldwide. □



A woman stands at a bus stop showing an incorrect temperature reading of 65 degrees from being under direct sunlight during the first heatwave of the summer in Madrid, on June 28, 2025.

Troubled waters: Jakarta battles deadly, invasive suckerfish

Jakarta, Indonesia

Mounds of slimy carcasses pile up on a riverbank in Jakarta where authorities are fighting an uphill battle against a fast-breeding invasive fish flourishing in Java island's heavily polluted waterways.

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sapu also known as suckermouth catfish, janitor fish or pleco -- can grow to half a metre (20 inches) in length and a female can lay thousands of eggs every year.

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terview, nearly halfway through a 1,200-kilometre (746-mile) run from Bali to Jakarta to raise money for river cleanups and having witnessed the crisis at several stops along the way.

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Some activists have criticised the procedure as wasteful, arguing the skin could be used for fish leather products and the rest processed into fertiliser or animal feed.

But others say the fish are too contaminated to be useful, and definitely not fit for human consumption.

"It contains... heavy metals and is dangerous to humans," Anwar said.

Tests conducted for scientific studies have found traces of lead and mercury as well as E.coli bacteria beyond safe levels in sapu-sapu. □

Ghana artist's billboard campaign takes aim at fast fashion fallout

Accra, Ghana

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drinks is draped in a cascade of worn shirts frayed collars, faded blues and greys and a striking circular

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Ghana's artist Emmanuel Aggrey poses for a photograph next to a billboard covered with clothes as part of the "Baleboard" project in Accra on 5 May 2026.

A quick snack for the road Learn how to make the Aruban Pastechi!

(Oranjestad)—If you ever been to Aruba before, you probably heard of (and even tried) the Aruban Pastechi. Beloved by young and old, this tasty treat is a staple for party snacks, a quick lunch or even breakfast!

Here's how to make the Pastechi dough.

Ingredients:

- 4 cups of wheat flour
- 1 tbsp baking powder (if using self-rising flour, omit baking powder)
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 0.5 cup of melted butter
- 1 cup water
- 1 egg

Directions:

Sift your flour into a bowl and add all the dry ingredients before giving it a quick mix. Next add the butter, water and egg and mix until thoroughly combined. At this point, your dough will start to get sticky; time for an arm workout. Knead your dough into the bowl you are using or on a clean surface with some flour lightly dusted until its surface is smooth. You'll know your dough is ready when it doesn't stick to your hands or the surface on which you're kneading it. Let your dough rest covered for 15-20 minutes.

After resting, divide your dough into approximately 100 gram balls and roll it flat with a rolling pin. The thickness of the pastechi depends on your taste, but the average thinness would be around ¼ inch or so.

Filling for the pastechis varies according to your taste. The easiest and most common filling



you'll find in Aruba is a simple cheese filling. For this, we usually use shredded Gouda, but feel free to use any cheese that melts well when frying the pastry.

Place the filling on your rolled out piece of dough, fold it in half and pinch the sides shut with a fork. If you have a folding tool, feel free to use it for this process. Your pastechi is ready for the fryer!

If you want to store some pastechis for later use, you can freeze them. A good tip is to place a

piece of wax paper in between each pastechi if you are to store them on top of one another. This way the pastechis don't stick to each other when defrosting.

Here in Aruba we enjoy pastechi at any time of the day, but it has become almost tradition to eat pastechis for breakfast on the way to work. Many roadside snack trucks sell pastechi from early morning to noon, and offer a variety of fillings like cheese; ham and cheese; ground beef and pulled chicken to name a few. □

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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Aruba to me



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Conchi: Aruba's hidden natural pool

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there is an additional "hidden" natural pools that is situated in the northern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary. This is Conchi.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park,

you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

If you decide to hike from the entrance of the Arikok National Park, this is also possible: do bring plenty of protective clothing and enough water and food—it could take you up to three hours to hike there!

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other



side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming),

the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

Fun fact: "Conchi" means small bowl in Papiamentu. Once you get there, you may see why we call it that. □

Why You Should Not Miss Aruba's Free City Center Street Car Tour

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's City Center Street Car – or as we call it in Dutch; "Tram van Oranjestad" – is a single track tram line in Oranjestad, the capital city of Aruba. It was inaugurated on 22 December 2012, being the first and so far the only passenger rail service on Aruba and the rest of the Dutch Caribbean. There are two trolleys, a single-deck one with 42 seats and a double-decker with 64 seats. The line was inspired by the popular battery-powered streetcar operation at the Grove in Los Angeles, USA. Aruba's streetcars are powered by hydrogen fuel cells, which are charged by the island's year-round trade winds.

decker offers you a 360 degree view of the down town area with a picture perfect scenery of the island's clear blue skies. Who would not enjoy a ride on this beautiful

and naturally air-conditioned vehicle? The tour consists of a total of 9 stops approximately 200 meters apart from each other; all stops are clearly marked. The tram will bring

you close to different museums, historical plazas, monuments, the Protestant church, Aruba's high-end mall, retail shops, and a variety of local and international cuisine restaurants. The "I love Aruba" trademark also belongs to that list. The third stop on the route is close to a 5-minute walk to the famous Renaissance Marina showcasing luxurious yachts and Aruba's blue waters.



Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-

The "Tram van Oranjestad" starts from a balloon loop near the Port of Call and serves the downtown area and ends at Plaza Nicky. The first ride starts at 10:00 am sharp with intervals of 25 minutes. The last trolley departs from the cruise port at 5:00 pm. Don't miss this tour of the beautiful Aruba's City Center – it is free for all! □

FHTMS Hosts 5th Anniversary Fundraising Dinner: “A Mediterranean Night in Provence”

The University of Aruba's Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management Studies (FHTMS) will host its fifth anniversary fundraising dinner, “A Mediterranean Night in Provence,” on May 9, 2026, at 6:00 PM at the University of Aruba.

The event promises a sophisticated evening inspired by Mediterranean flavors and the charm of Provence, offering guests a unique culinary and cultural experience while supporting the continued growth of hospitality education in Aruba.

More than a fundraising initiative, the dinner serves as

a fully immersive, student-led learning experience. Organized as part of the MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Events) course, the event represents the culmination of students' academic journey, allowing them to apply theoretical knowledge in a real-world setting. From initial concept development and planning to execution and service, students are responsible for every aspect of the evening.

Throughout the event, guests will be served by students who have carefully designed and prepared the experience, providing them with invaluable

hands-on training in hospitality and event management. The initiative not only supports the faculty but also creates a meaningful opportunity for students to develop professional skills in a live environment.

By attending the fundraising dinner, guests are not only contributing to the advancement of hospitality education but also actively supporting the next generation of industry professionals as they showcase their skills and dedication.

To make reservations, interested attendees may contact (297) 561-2456 or email 193720@student.ua.aw. □

A Mediterranean Night in Provence

You're invited to an enchanting evening of Mediterranean flavors and Provençal charm. Join us for the 5th anniversary of the University of Aruba's fundraising dinner.

May 9, 2026
6pm
University of Aruba
\$125 p.p.

Info & Reservations
(297) 561-2456 | 193720@student.ua.aw

Divi & Tamarijn Aruba All Inclusive University of Aruba

Aruba's underwater wonderland

(Oranjestad)—Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating under water spots you can explore. So take your snorkeling gear and visit some of these top places for underwater exploration.

Tres Trapi

'Tres Trapi' means three

steps in Papiamentu. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by a tiny stairway carved into the rocky coastline. Tres Trapi is a small beach, located on the north-western side of the island, an approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you walk right into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While you're snorkeling, you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean Sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea turtles.



Respect the animals, keep your distance and just enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken WWII ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach is a lagoon with crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still



felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Further in the lagoon, you'll find a lot of people snorkeling. This is an excellent spot to go under water exploring—but do take care not to go too far out; outside the lagoon the waves can be pretty rough! In the lagoon there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is lo-

cated in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. The main entrance to reach the beach is through a small bridge that takes you through the mangrove trees. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, accompanied with wooden stairs built to allow easy access to the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you'll find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is snorkel heaven. □

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 sub-existence 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 century 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, Papiamentu, 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



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 38 "Olympia"

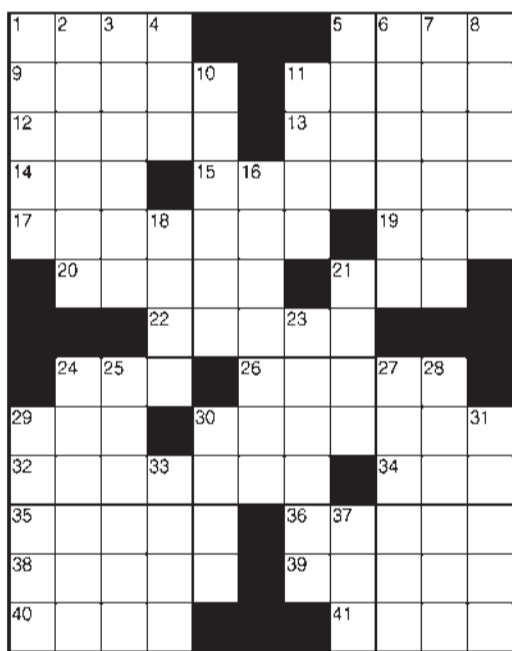
- 1 "Waterloo" painter
- group 39 Original
- 5 Robe 40 Pub
- feature brews
- 9 Fixes, 41 Water
- as holey source
- socks

DOWN

- 11 Mercutio's friend
- 12 Deceive
- 13 Cheering loudly
- 14 — bind
- 15 Players at the plate
- 17 Improves
- 19 Small worker
- 20 Brief
- 21 Young fellow
- 22 Con- cerning
- 24 Passing craze
- 26 Left on a liner
- 29 Middle- earth baddie
- 30 Old- fashioned ingredient
- 32 Tops, as toast
- 34 Boar's mate
- 35 Old market
- 36 Blown away



- 1 Make up lines
- 10 Gets serious
- 25 Play opener
- 2 Johnson's middle
- 11 "Dog-gone!"
- 27 Make a backup copy, say
- 3 Exhalation
- 16 Craft show's
- 28 Mason's tool
- 4 Small worker
- 18 Warty critter
- 29 44th president
- 5 Classify
- 21 Easy run
- 30 Trounce
- 6 One-celled organism
- 23 Chooses to partici- pate
- 31 Expand
- 7 Blackened
- 8 Neigh sayer
- 24 Thrifty
- 37 At present



1-11

A XYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

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.

I-II

CRYPTOQUOTE

X R F S Q H I J L Q E Q H

W B O W F S S Q R I Q F

YHBYQMO. — SQDDE YWBIQF
Cryptoquote: YOU KNOW HOW I ALWAYS DREAD THE WHOLE YEAR? WELL, THIS TIME I'M ONLY GOING TO DREAD ONE DAY AT A TIME. — CHARLIE BROWN

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.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

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 occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.



CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

02 SAT	CARIBBEAN PRINCESS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
05 TUE	CELEBRITY SILHOUTTE CARNIVAL MAGIC	Arrival: 08:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: B Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
06 WED	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 11:59 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
12 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
19 TUE	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
20 WED	ALLURE OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL VISTA	Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: I Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: C
21 THU	CARNIVAL VENEZIA	Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
26 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS	Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C

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



Difficulty: ★★★★★

5/8

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

5/7

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Covid flashbacks haunt Canary Islands as hantavirus ship nears

Granadilla de Abona, Spain

Six years after registering Spain's first Covid case, the Canary Islands are awaiting the arrival of a cruise ship struck by a deadly hantavirus outbreak that is reviving painful memories. "It was nothing, and then look what happened," retiree Marco Gonzalez told AFP on the island of Tenerife as he recalled early conversations about the pandemic that upended daily life in 2020.

The 74-year-old was enjoying his morning stroll on the coastal promenade in El Medano, close to where the MV Hondius vessel dominating the headlines is due to arrive this weekend. The small industrial port of Granadilla hosts little commercial activity and is close to Tenerife South international airport, which will help the evacuation of the ship's crew and passengers.

The imminent arrival now dominates talk in the Atlantic archipelago, as three people from the vessel have died and another three have been evacuated for care in Europe.

"People are thinking about that, what happened five or six years ago," said Alicia Rodriguez, owner of an ice cream parlour in El Medano.

"We paid the consequences for two years," added the 57-year-old, whose popular business sells coffee and churros from the early morning and into the night, referring to the lockdowns imposed during the pandemic.

- 'Everyone is worried' -

The central government in Madrid says the ship's arrival poses no threat to public health or the economy in the picturesque islands, which rely heavily on tourism.

Insisting that hantavirus is not like Covid-19, the World Health Organization has also pointed to a low risk for public health worldwide after the outbreak of a rare version of the infection that is transmissible between humans.



Windsurfers are pictured in the port of Granadilla de Abona on the island of Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands on May 6, 2026.

Yet the regional government of the archipelago, located far from mainland Europe off northwestern Africa, has bristled at Madrid over the boat's reception, complaining about a lack of information and consultation.

Rodriguez said people "will try to do things in the least dangerous way possible, but everyone is livid". For Cristo Alvarez, who was sipping his coffee in Rodriguez's ice cream parlour, "everyone is worried about what it (the ship) might bring".

But like most islanders who spoke with AFP, the 42-year-old butane gas distributor believed it was necessary "to help" the stricken passengers, who

have been stuck for weeks in the Atlantic Ocean.

"They have to go somewhere," agreed Andy Robbins, 59, a British pensioner who has been living on Tenerife for a year. His family in England "say to me 'stay safe, stay safe', but it's OK", Robbins said.

- 'Colonial' attitude -

The archipelago has often complained of a lack of solidarity from the rest of Spain and the European Union when faced with tens of thousands of irregular migrants arriving on its shores every year.

Local media have cited the arrival of the MV Hondius to again raise grievances about the treatment of the islands.

"Just as what happened with the handling of migration, the temptation to transform the Canaries into a physical, operational and logistical barricade for future outbreaks of infections and pandemics must not succeed," a columnist wrote in the daily Tenerife newspaper El Dia.

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

IOC lifts Olympic ban on Belarus but Russia 'still suspended'

Lausanne, Switzerland

The IOC on Thursday lifted its ban on Belarusian athletes competing in the Olympics, although restrictions on Russian athletes remain in place.

Competitors from Russia and their allies Belarus had been banned from international competition following Russia's 2022 invasion of Ukraine, although some were permitted to compete as neutrals.

Russians will still only be able to compete in Olympic competition under the neutral banner, on an individual basis, and only if they have not actively supported the conflict.

The IOC executive board released a statement saying that it "no longer recommends any restrictions on the participation of Belarusian athletes, including teams".

"The IOC reaffirms that athletes' participation in international competition should not be limited by the actions of their governments, including involvement in a war or conflict," it said. This new policy should allow for a Belarusian delegation to compete at the Los Angeles Summer Olym-



This combination of pictures created on May 7, 2026 shows (L) the Olympic flag during a practice session at Eiffel Tower Stadium in Paris on July 24, 2024, ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympic Games and (R) a Belarus flag during an air show in the capital Minsk, on June 21, 2014.

pics in 2028, when they will be present at the opening ceremony and included in the medals table.

The IOC said that the timing of the statement recognised that the qualification period for the 2028 Games begins this (northern hemisphere) summer.

"On behalf of the entire Belarusian sporting public, we express our gratitude to IOC President Kirsty Coventry for her balanced and principled stance," said the Belarusian Olympic Committee.

"We are firmly convinced that sport is called to serve as a unifying force and must remain an arena free from political influence,"

said the statement adding that Belarus hoped the decision "will become a defining benchmark for international sports federations, which will, in the shortest possible time, lift all restrictions on Belarusian athletes in all sports."

Some Olympic sports, such as judo and swimming, have already lifted restrictions but Belarus are still unlikely to be able to compete as a team in track and field after World Athletics said in response to the IOC announcement that it was keeping its ban in place.

"As a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, World Athletics sanctions implemented in March 2022 excluding Belarusian

and Russian athletes, officials and supporting personnel from competition remain in place," said a World Athletics spokesperson.

"Our council has made a clear decision that when there is tangible movement towards peace negotiations it can begin to review its decisions. We all hope this will be soon."

- 'In good standing' -

At the last two Olympics in Paris 2024 and the Milan-Cortina Winter Games in February, Belarusians competed alongside Russians as "Individual Neutral Athletes", stripped of their national colours and in small numbers -- there were 17 in

Paris and seven in Italy. And for the moment that will remain the case for Russian athletes wanting to take part in Los Angeles.

"The situation relating to the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) is different from that relating to the National Olympic Committee (NOC) of Belarus," said the IOC in their statement. The ROC has been suspended since autumn 2023 for having placed the sports organisations of four occupied Ukrainian regions under its authority.

However, the IOC also said that fresh concerns have recently arisen regarding the Russian anti-doping system which was first exposed in late 2015 following the Sochi Winter Games the year before.

"The difference is the Belarusian National Olympic Committee was never suspended. And they've always been in good standing," IOC president Kirsty Coventry told reporters.

"The most recent information which led to the World Anti-Doping Agency looking into a potential doping allegation, we do not know how long that will take." □

Dubois vows to take out 'trash' WBO heavyweight champion Wardley

London, United Kingdom

Daniel Dubois is determined to make the "trash" Fabio Wardley eat his words when he faces the reigning champion in an all-British bout for the World Boxing Organization heavyweight title in Manchester on Saturday.

Dubois, who has a professional record of 22 wins and three defeats, with 21 knockouts, has been angered by an apparently casual comment made by Wardley in an interview with broadcaster DAZN.

Wardley (20-0-1, 19KOs) said Dubois would be a "bin man" if the London heavyweight was not a boxer.

An intense and unscheduled face-off occurred after Dubois stuck around to

watch Wardley in Wednesday's open workout.

The two fighters were involved in yet more verbal sparring on Thursday at Co-op Live, the Manchester venue for the fight.

Dubois, 28, knows he needs

a convincing victory to maintain his credentials as a leading heavyweight following a crushing defeat by unified world champion Oleksandr Usyk in July last year.

"Well, I am going to take

out the trash. I am the dustman, he is the trash mate. I'll take out the trash," Dubois said of Wardley.

"I shared the ring with a top southpaw, a top heavyweight in Usyk, the best of his generation. I am a new fighter now and I am a new man."

Wardley started out as a 'white-collar boxer', taking part in events for amateurs with other jobs.

He endured gruelling sparring sessions with Dubois early in his professional boxing career but the 31-year-old now finds himself a world champion following a sensational stoppage of Joseph Parker in October.

Dubois, however, insisted Wardley's time was up.

"I mean, his luck runs out when he comes against me," he said.

"You've seen him keep coming back from the dead and this time he stays dead. RIP."

Wardley, meanwhile, defended his bin man comment by saying Thursday: "Someone asked me what you might have as a job and I said, 'it might be a bin man', but don't let other people get in your head."

"It's not disrespectful. I didn't say it was a bad job."

Saturday's bout against Dubois will be Wardley's first title defence as WBO champion "Irrespective of pedigree, history, experience, I believe that I can beat him," he said. □



Britain's Daniel Dubois arrives ahead of his undisputed world heavyweight boxing title bout against Ukraine's Oleksandr Usyk at Wembley Stadium in London on July 19, 2025.

Spurs thrash Timberwolves as Knicks edge Sixers in NBA playoffs

New York, United States

Victor Wembanyama's San Antonio Spurs thrashed the Minnesota Timberwolves 133-95 to level their NBA playoff series as the New York Knicks edged Philadelphia for a 2-0 lead Wednesday.

Bouncing back from a home-court upset loss on Monday, the Western Conference second-seeded Spurs' resounding win reestablishes them as favorites to progress.

Seven-foot-four (2.24m) phenom Wembanyama was in imperious form again in San Antonio, with 19 points plus 15 rebounds and two blocks, as the Spurs notched up their highest playoff score since 1983.

The newly crowned NBA defensive player of the year also helped restrict Minnesota to just 35 points in the first half the Timberwolves' lowest-scoring half all season to ensure the vital series-tying win was essentially decided by the break.

"I'm expecting this kind of response from myself, from my teammates, so I'm not surprised by any means," said Wembanyama.

"There is some ego. They assaulted us in game one, we wanted to assault in game two," the Frenchman added.



Jaden McDaniels #3 of the Minnesota Timberwolves shoots the ball against Victor Wembanyama #1 of the San Antonio Spurs during the third quarter in Game Two of the Second Round of the NBA Western Conference Playoffs at Frost Bank Center on May 06, 2026 in San Antonio, Texas.

Minnesota's 24-point half-time deficit only widened in the second half, peaking at 47 points, before San Antonio rested its starters for the final stages.

The performance came after Minnesota's head coach had accused Wembanyama of repeated illegal goaltending violations in game one, during which the Frenchman had made a playoff-record 12 blocks. Asked if there had been any anger on his part entering game two, he re-

plied: "There always is. In the playoffs, magnify that." Minnesota ace Anthony Edwards, who shone in game one after returning from a left knee injury, was restricted to 12 points and spent the final quarter on the bench icing his legs. The two sides meet again Friday in Minneapolis for game three.

- 'Ugly' -

Jalen Brunson spearheaded a late surge as the New York Knicks edged a razor-tight NBA playoff clash

against the Philadelphia 76ers 108-102 to take a 2-0 lead in their Eastern Conference semi-final series.

Having been thrashed in game one, the underdog Sixers were without star man Joel Embiid, who was ruled out with injury hours before tip-off.

But they put up a much fiercer fight at Madison Square Garden, in a game featuring 25 lead changes the most for a playoff game in 11 years before the Knicks pulled clear in the final minutes.

Brunson's clutch play including eight fourth-quarter points ensured victory, with the Knicks talisman joint top-scoring on 26 points.

"It's a playoff basketball game. You know, the game was ugly offensively," said Knicks coach Mike Brown.

The Sixers took a seven-point lead after five minutes. It would prove to be the largest of the closely contested night.

In Embiid's absence, Tyrese Maxey stepped up with 15 points in the second quarter alone, as Philadelphia eked out a single-point half-time lead.

But the Knicks' Karl-Anthony Towns came alive after the break, scoring 20 points plus 10 rebounds and seven assists, while OG Anunoby went 9-of-17 from the field for his 24 points.

With the scores level 99-99 and five minutes to go, Brunson applied the pressure just as the Sixers ran out of steam.

Two Brunson field goals gave New York a four-point lead their biggest of the night to that point before Mikal Bridges' step-back shot made it a 9-0 run and a six-point lead.

Maxey made a late driving layup finishing with 26 points but it was not enough to close the gap. □

Trump says he would not pay \$1,000 to watch U.S. at World Cup

New York, United States President Donald Trump said in an interview published Thursday that he would not pay the \$1,000-plus ticket price for the United States' first World Cup match, piling pressure on FIFA over its sky-high costs.

"I did not know that number," the billionaire Trump told the New York Post, adding "I would certainly like to be there, but I wouldn't pay it either, to be honest with you."

U.S. lawmakers and international fan groups have slammed FIFA over its pricing structure for the tournament that kicks off in June, with Football Sup-

porters Europe branding it a "monumental betrayal." Trump appeared concerned that lower-income Americans -- a key voting bloc for him -- would be priced out of attending the World Cup.

"If people from Queens and Brooklyn and all of the people that love Donald Trump can't go, I would be disappointed, but, you know, at the same time, it's an amazing success."

"I would like to be able to have the people that voted for me to be able to go," added Trump, who takes credit for securing the World Cup for the United States during his first

term as president. Trump is close to FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who on Tuesday insisted the governing body was obliged to take advantage of U.S. laws that allow tickets to be resold for thousands of dollars above face value.

He said that FIFA received over 500 million ticket requests for 2026, compared with fewer than 50 million combined for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups.

The FIFA leader added that 25 percent of tickets for the group phase were priced at under \$300.

Fan groups have contrasted the tickets for this summer with the Qatar World

Cup in 2022. The most expensive ticket for the final in 2022 was

around \$1,600 at face value, while in 2026 it is about \$11,000. □



(L-R) U.S. President Donald Trump receives the FIFA Peace Prize from Italian Fifa President Gianni Infantino during the draw for the 2026 FIFA Football World Cup taking place in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, at the Kennedy Center, in Washington, DC, on December 5, 2025.

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Sinner demands 'respect' from Grand Slams, Djokovic lends support in prize money row

Rome, Italy

Jannik Sinner called on Thursday for Grand Slam tournaments to show tennis players respect in a row over prize money, as Novak Djokovic pledged his support to the players in their battle with the sport's major events.

Last year almost all the leading players signed two letters to the four Grand Slam bosses demanding an increase in prize money, payments into a player welfare fund to improve retirement and maternity benefits, as well as involvement in decisions that affected them.

The letters set a target of a 22-percent share in tournament revenue, which would bring the majors in line with the nine combined 1000-level events run by the ATP men's tour and the women's WTA tour. But Sinner told reporters at

the Italian Open in Rome that the players were no nearer an agreement with

the organisers of Wimbledon and the French, US and Australian Opens.

"It's more about respect. Because I think we give much more than we are

getting back. It's not only for the top players; it's for all of us players," Sinner said.



Italy's Jannik Sinner (R) stands next to tennis coaches Italy's Simone Vagnozzi (C) and Australia's Darren Cahill (L) during a training session at the WTA Rome Open tennis tournament at the Foro Italico in Rome on May 7, 2026.

"It's not nice that after one year we are not even close to conclusion of what we would like to have."

On Tuesday women's world number one Aryna Sabalenka said that she was ready to boycott the Grand Slams in order for the players to force organisers' hands.

Those comments came after players said in a statement that last month's announcement by the French Open of a 9.5-percent prize money rise was not good enough.

It said that a 14-percent increase in revenue last year only led to the total prize purse going up by 5.4 percent, reducing the players' share to 14.3 percent. □