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U.S. races to secure rare earths to rebuild depleted arsenal

New York, United States

The United States is working hard to create a supply chain for rare earths -- metals needed to replenish its military arsenal amid the conflict in Iran -- that does not depend on China, the sector's global leader.

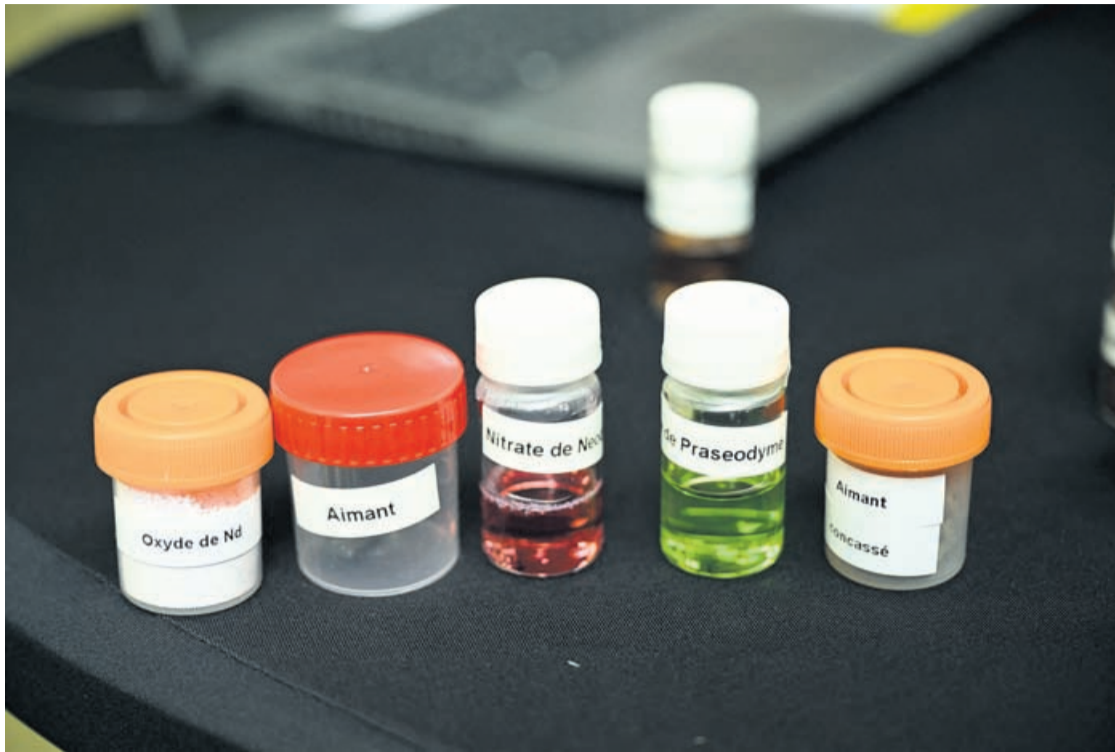
Just a few grams of these materials are needed to make a television or laptop computer, but hundreds of grams are required for each Tomahawk or Patriot missile. The Payne Institute for Public Policy at the Colorado School of Mines estimates US forces have fired thousands of missiles at Iranian targets since late February.

"The Middle East conflict is exposing in real time which minerals are truly mission-critical and exactly where supply chains could break under pressure," said Mahnaz Khan, a vice president of the Silverado Policy Accelerator think tank.

"This could add another layer of stress to the nation's ability to reconstitute the weapons," Khan said, noting that rare earths are used in "everything from drones and interceptors to F-35s and precision-guided missiles."

The Center for Strategic and International Studies, another think tank in Washington, said in late April that "restoring depleted stockpiles and then achieving the desired inventory levels will take many years."

The most-used rare earths are neodymium and praseodymium. Both are vital in



This photograph taken in Lacq, south-western France, on May 5, 2026 shows samples of products derived from rare earths at the site of the Caremag plant, belonging to Carester, a French company specializing in the extraction, processing and recycling of strategic minerals, particularly rare earth elements

the manufacture of so-called "permanent" magnets, which are 10 times stronger than traditional magnets and used in electric vehicles, wind turbines and smartphones.

Samarium, another of the 17 rare earths, is used in magnets needed in the defense industry.

During Donald Trump's first term as president, and then under his successor Joe Biden, the United States boosted its share of global rare earth production from three to 13 percent, thanks to subsidies and tax incentives. Until last year, there was only one major rare earths mine -- at Mountain Pass in California, operated by MP

Materials.

In July, Ramaco Resources opened the first new rare earths mine in more than 70 years -- the Brook mine in Wyoming, but so far, nothing has been produced at the site.

Other mine projects are in development in Montana, Wyoming and Nebraska.

The United States is also counting on recycling to help fuel its supply chains. Trump's administration is looking abroad as well. It recently facilitated the acquisition of Brazilian producer Serra Verde by startup USA Rare Earth, in which the US government took a 10 percent stake in January.

- 'Leapfrog' China -

But extraction is only the first phase of a process that also includes refining and separation (in order to isolate the various elements) before processing.

The separation stage is what has helped China dominate the sector. As of last year, it controlled 91 percent of global separation by volume, according to the International Energy Agency.

Authorities in China have used rare earths as a bargaining chip. Last year, Beijing restricted exports of certain rare earths before later lifting the measure.

India, Japan and France are also working hard to unlock China's stranglehold on the

industry. And the subject will be on the agenda for Trump's talks in Beijing with Chinese President Xi Jinping this week.

James Litinsky, the CEO of MP Materials -- in which the government has a 15 percent stake, to launch separation operations -- said separation activities will begin "imminently" at the Mountain Pass site.

In January, US firm Energy Fuels -- which also produces uranium -- took control of Australia's ASM and is planning to build a new site in the United States, which will handle separation.

USA Rare Earth has invested in French rare earths specialist Carester, and they are together working on perfecting the separation process.

As for the end of the supply chain, startups Vulcan Elements and eVAC Magnetics started making permanent magnets last year. MP Materials should join that group shortly.

"We're not just selling magnets," Vulcan Elements CEO John Maslin told AFP.

"We're offering a secure, China-independent supply chain. Our priority is ensuring that the United States and its allies can access the magnets they'll need for national security and economic resilience."

For Roderick Eggert, a professor at the Colorado School of Mines, it will take time for competitors to grow big enough to "significantly reduce the market shares of the Chinese producers." □



A makeshift memorial of opioid overdose victims is seen outside the US District Court for the District of New Jersey in Newark, New Jersey on April 28, 2026.

Washington, United States

U.S. drug overdose deaths

declined in 2025 for the third consecutive year, new data

Overdose deaths continue to decrease across U.S.

showed Wednesday, marking continued progress in combatting the nation's long-running opioid crisis.

An estimated 69,973 people died from drug overdoses in 2025, a drop of nearly 14 percent from the 81,313 deaths estimated one year prior, according to figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top U.S. health agency. Deaths involving opioids -- including fentanyl, the powerful and addictive synthetic drug -- accounted for an estimated

44,564 fatalities in 2025. It's a significant decrease from 2024, when opioids were involved in 55,296 deaths. For more than 20 years the United States has faced a severe public health crisis fueled by synthetic opioids that have flooded across the country. Following a staggering surge in fatalities -- in 2022, for example, nearly 108,000 total overdose deaths were recorded -- the country has experienced steady declines, a trend confirmed by the latest provisional figures.

Public health experts say the promising trend can be attributed to several factors, including improved access to naloxone -- the opioid overdose antidote known as Narcan, which became available over the counter in the spring of 2023 -- as well as improved addiction treatment access.

The distribution of tools like test strips used to screen for fentanyl in illicit drugs also have played a significant role. □

In Washington, the fight to preserve Black cemeteries

Washington, United States

Georgetown, one of present-day Washington's most expensive neighborhoods, used to be a hub of Black life in the U.S. capital.

Little remains of this history since gentrification began in the 1930s, but remnants of its African American roots can be found in cemeteries that have suffered from decades of disrepair.

The Black Georgetown Foundation is working to preserve the memories of the estimated eight-to-ten thousand people buried in two cemeteries: of Mount Zion Church, one of the oldest Black churches in the city, and the Female Union Band Society, founded in 1802 and 1842, respectively.

"We have a spiritual obligation to uplift and preserve the memories of those who are buried here," said the foundation president, Neville Waters, whose great-grandfather Charles Turner -- freed from slavery when he was six years old -- is among those interred there.

The site is owned by a trust and the Mount Zion United Methodist Church, which is still active to this day.

A walk through its leafy surroundings offers a snapshot of the past.

There is a stele marking the 1851 gravesite of Reverend Cartwright, who was also born into slavery and went on to become the first Black Methodist pastor in the Baltimore, Maryland area.



Signs outside of the Mount Zion Cemetery/Female Union Band Society Cemetery are seen in the Georgetown neighborhood of Washington, DC on May 10, 2026.

A few steps away is the final resting place of Nannie, a seven-year-old girl who died in 1856, her gravesite decorated with toys. But time and neglect have taken their toll.

In 1930, a bridle path, now a bike trail, was put down over some of the grave sites.

"We have leaning headstones, we have broken headstones, we have headstones that look like they don't have anything on them," Lisa Fager, the Black Georgetown Foundation's executive director, told AFP. "We're trying to name everybody, and so there's a lot of research," she added.

So far the organization has recovered around 4,500 names.

- 'Spiritual obligation' -

Facing the burial sites is Oak Hill Cemetery, founded in 1848, where only a small handful of people of color have been laid to rest.

With its neat rows and manicured headstones, the cemetery stands in stark contrast to its majority-Black neighbors.

Antoinette Jackson, an anthropology professor at the University of South Florida, oversees the Black Cemetery Network, which catalogs African American cemeteries across the United States.

The network's index of 210 sites, about three-quarters which have been covered by various developments, are the "tip of the iceberg,"

she explained.

"Many of these cemeteries would never, ever resource in the same way as particularly white cemeteries," the researcher said, adding that during segregation in the United States, "the oversight, the protection, the legal means that typically go into what you do with the cemetery was not extended to black folks."

In 2022, Congress passed a law on the preservation of Black cemeteries, the African American Burial Grounds Preservation Act, but the program has never been funded.

- 'So we don't forget' -

Among the preservation challenges facing the ceme-

teries is the issue of flooding, as wastewater from nearby streets gets channeled into the burial sites.

The fight came to a head in 2021 with the Black Georgetown Foundation raising the issue with the city, and in late 2025 construction began to work on rerouting the water. "We've had problems with flooding because there was limited sewage and water management here," Waters said, adding that "we are embarking on sort of a second renaissance" now. The group also received a \$125,000 restoration grant from the city in December 2025.

"Now we want to turn this into a historic memorial park," Fager said of the Mount Zion and Female Union Band Society cemeteries, "so that we can tell American history and make sure that people remember that there was a Black Georgetown."

"I think that because of the political climate we're in, it actually draws people closer to want to know more about American history," she continued.

The Black Georgetown Foundation offers tours of the cemeteries to school groups and organizes holiday events, including for Juneteenth, which marks the end of slavery in the United States.

In 2023, the grave site for Nannie -- the seven-year-old girl -- was burned, Fager said, holding a charred toy in her hands. □

U.S. relaxes visa bonds for World Cup fans



This undated and unlocated handout image released by Democrats on the House Oversight Committee on December 18, 2025 shows a visa for Morocco.

Washington, United States

The United States said Wednesday it would ease its system of demanding bond payments of visa applicants for certain fans seeking to come for the World Cup.

Under one of President Donald Trump's many initiatives to crack down on migration, the United States has begun asking people from 50 developing countries to hand over anywhere from \$5,000 to \$15,000 for a U.S. visa, refundable once they return home.

The State Department said it would waive the bonds for team members compet-

ing in World Cup matches in the United States as well as for fans from competing countries who already have tickets and signed up for a priority system set up for visas.

"We remain committed to strengthening U.S. national security priorities while facilitating legitimate travel for the upcoming World Cup tournament," said Mora Namdar, the assistant secretary of state for consular affairs.

She said the Trump administration wanted to organize the "biggest and best FIFA World Cup in history."

"Today's announcement from the US State Department further demonstrates our ongoing collaboration with the US Government and the White House Task Force for the FIFA World Cup to deliver a successful, record-breaking and unforgettable global event," a FIFA spokesperson said in a statement.

Five countries that qualified for the World Cup are among those whose nationals are required to pay visa bonds: Algeria, Cape Verde, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Tunisia. □

Madonna, Shakira, BTS to headline first World Cup final halftime show

New York, United States

Madonna, Shakira and K-pop megastars BTS will headline a Super Bowl-style halftime show at the World Cup final on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, FIFA said Thursday.

Coldplay's Chris Martin is curating the show, which is a first for a football World Cup final but has raised concerns about how long the game's halftime break will be.

The biggest-ever World Cup, with 48 teams, kicks off on June 11 in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino said the halftime show would be "definitely the biggest stage ever," with six billion people expected to watch the World Cup, and "a couple of billion" tuning in for the final.

The half-time show, which will also feature characters from Sesame Street and The Muppets, will support FIFA's Global Citizen Education Fund, an initiative working to raise \$100 million for children worldwide during the World Cup.

Shakira confirmed she will perform the tournament's official anthem, "Dai Dai," and announced she will



Dallas Stadium (temporarily renamed from AT&T Stadium for the 2026 FIFA World Cup) is seen with purple lights illuminating the field to promote grass growth, in Arlington, Texas, on May 14, 2026. (Photo by RONALDO SCHEMIDT / AFP)

donate "100 percent of the proceeds" of the song to the fund.

"These are very troubled times, and it's important that we all come together, to remember and to remind everyone how important our kids are and their education," Shakira told the Global Citizen NOW event in New York.

In a statement, Madonna described the concert in support of expanding global education as "deeply meaningful to me."

"Music is the universal language of hope and harmony, and we're honored to celebrate that power at the World Cup by connecting with millions of viewers around the world in support of children's education," added BTS.

- 'Biggest sporting event' - Infantino had announced last year that there would be a first-ever halftime show "befitting the biggest sporting event in the world" at the World Cup final.

A halftime show was trialed at last year's FIFA Club World

Cup final, also at MetLife Stadium. It stretched the break in excess of the regulation 15 minutes.

Shakira also performed at halftime during the final of the 2024 Copa America in Miami.

The singer -- who has a long association with the World Cup, having created the 2010 tournament's anthem "Waka Waka" -- teased "Dai Dai" last week in a brief video of the track filmed at Brazil's iconic Maracana Stadium.

In the 67-second video, Shakira appears on the pitch at the Maracana in Rio de Janeiro, where she performed in a free concert at the city's Copacabana Beach before two million people.

Holding the "Trionda," the official match ball of the 2026 World Cup, Shakira performed excerpts of the song in English, joined by dancers dressed in the colors of teams including the United States and Colombia.

The song was produced with Nigerian artist Burna Boy and is set for official release on Thursday. The clip, also shared by the FIFA World Cup account, ends with the message: "We're ready!"

The World Cup will feature three separate opening ceremonies -- one in each of its host countries -- starting with Mexico on June 11, followed by Canada and the US the following day.

Global music stars including Katy Perry, Future, Alanis Morissette, Michael Buble, J Balvin and Lisa will feature across those three concerts.

Infantino has also said that FIFA plans to "take over" New York's Times Square on the final weekend of the World Cup. □

Romanian metal, Aussie star through to Eurovision final



Australian singer Delta Goodrem, representing Australia with the song 'Eclipse', reacts after her performance during the second semi-final of the Eurovision Song Contest 2026 (ESC) at Wiener Stadthalle in Vienna, Austria on May 14, 2026. (Photo by Tobias SCHWARZ / AFP)

Vienna, Austria

Romanian metal, a Danish ode to clubbing and Australian star Delta Goodrem will fill the airwaves in the Eurovision grand final after making it through the second semi-final on Thursday.

Contestants from 15 countries sang their hearts out in the Austrian capital to try to secure the last 10 places in Saturday's showpiece extravaganza at the Wiener Stadthalle.

Besides Australia, Denmark and Romania, which bookmakers place among the front-runners, Albania, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Malta, Norway and Ukraine live to fight another day.

But it was Goodnight Vienna for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Luxembourg and Switzerland, who saw their Eurovision dreams crumble.

In line with the final, this year, the semis were decided by public televoting and also by professional juries.

While waiting for the nerve-shredding results reveal, the crowd danced a mass Viennese waltz. Eurovision is the world's biggest live televised music event, typically reaching more than 150 million viewers, and Vienna 2026 is the 70th edition of the glitzy show where spectacle and drama go hand in hand.

- Going off with a 'Bangaranga' -

Thursday's concert saw Switzerland's Veronica Fusaro tangled up in red webbing, Londoner Antigoni singing the sultry "Jalla" for Cyprus and Ukraine's Leleka hitting some ear-shredding high notes.

Bulgarian pop singer Dara got the party started with some highly choreographed dancing on "Bangaranga".

Filed in close-up, the Czech Republic's Daniel Zizka sang "Crossroads" in a hall of mirrors that began swirling like a zoetrope.

Armenia's Simon worked up a sweat on "Paloma Rumba", a song about a man "stuck on a wage / In a rage", which saw him trapped in a lift, wearing a jacket covered in yellow sticky notes. Romania swung the show into heavy rock on "Choke Me", which caused a minor furore in the Eurovision build-up over the lyrics.

However, singer Alexandra Capitanescu, a master's student at the Faculty of Physics in Bucharest, defended the song's meaning. □

'Ungovernable' Britain? Once-stable politics in freefall

London, United Kingdom

For years, under long-serving leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair, the worst mid-term challenge a British prime minister might face was a rowdy jeering in parliament.

Now, leaders in the country of the wartime slogan "keep calm and carry on" regularly fear for their jobs, with the latest, Keir Starmer, facing intense pressure this week to quit too.

Six people have held the post in a decade of turbulence driven by the wake of the global financial crisis, Brexit and Covid.

"Is it because the PMs are no good, or because the office has become impossible, or because the situation's become impossible?" mused historian Anthony Seldon, who has authored books on the last four prime ministers. "The answer is: it's a mixture of all three of those," he told AFP, judging the churn of leaders since 2016 "without precedent". For voters, the situation borders on farce.

"We've had so many prime ministers in the last few years, it's ridiculous," Londoner Claudio, who declined to give his surname, said Wednesday, calling Starmer's precarious hold on power "unfortunate". "But he's just not doing the right job anymore," he added.



This combination of pictures created on May 14, 2026 shows (FILES) Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer delivers his keynote address to delegates on the third day of the annual Labour Party conference in Liverpool, north-west England, on September 30, 2025.

Wes Streeting announced May 14, 2026, that he has resigned as Britain's health minister, paving the way for a potential leadership challenge against embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

- Seven-week term -

When David Cameron and his centre-right Conservatives ousted centre-left Labour in 2010, he became only the fifth prime minister in three decades.

Cameron quit six years later, after calling and then losing the referendum on remaining in the European Union, heralding an era of rare political instability.

There followed the ill-fated Downing Street tenures of Conservatives Theresa May, Boris Johnson, Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak.

Truss lasted just seven weeks -- a term memorably compared in the media to the

lifespan of a rotting lettuce. Starmer's 2024 victory, with a landslide number of parliamentary seats, was supposed to bookend that chaotic period.

But the Labour leader -- who won largely thanks to the splintering of votes on the right -- now faces being forced out, less than two years on.

Growing numbers of his own MPs and ministers have deserted him after a scandal over the appointment of an ambassador with links to the US sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

- 'Ungovernable' Britain? -

Seldon argued that Starmer, Johnson and Truss "never learned how to do the job", while acknowledging that it "has become more difficult" in the age of social media, constant polling and modern "instant gratification" culture. London School of Economics politics expert Tony Travers warned Britain now risks appearing "ungovernable", echoing a sentiment heard on political panel shows on TV. "It begins to look like countries that people in Britain used to make fun of in the past," he told AFP, with Italy's recent decades of political dysfunction one example typically cited.

Breaking the cycle, Travers said, would require working out "how to stop senior MPs thinking that somehow changing their leader all the time is the solution to other problems".

"Those problems include not enough growth, high and rising prices, inflation, and the general sense that politics is now fragmenting."

- Brexit impact -

Political analysts agree that meagre economic growth since the 2008 financial crisis has left successive governments with little to offer in the form of tax cuts or increased spending.

"Voters want politicians to make them richer. They cannot do that, but they pretend

that they can," Vernon Bogdanor, professor of government at King's College London, told AFP.

Seldon said servicing the country's huge debt has also become "an enormous constraint" as crises spook investors and make that more costly.

With foreign wars fuelling global instability, plus Covid and persistent inflation, British leaders have also had to contend with the country's highly disruptive EU departure in 2020.

"Brexit had a big effect... on stability in UK politics in a number of ways," said another King's political scientist, Anand Menon.

"It rearranged political affiliations," he told AFP. "It undoubtedly played a role in encouraging populist thinking and populist political forces."

- Populist 'danger' -

That in turn has strained Britain's traditional two-party political system, drawing scrutiny of the first-past-the-post voting system which does not reward smaller parties, reinforcing some voters' sense of being ignored.

Far-right anti-immigration party Reform UK has emerged as a major challenger to Starmer's Labour and the leftist Green party has also made electoral gains. □

Pacific nation Nauru to change name in break from colonial past

Sydney, Australia

Pacific island Nauru said it will hold a referendum to change its official name, described as a colonial relic from a time when "foreign tongues" mangled the native language.

Nauru would change its name to "Naoero" to "more faithfully honor our nation's heritage, our language, and our identity", President David Adeang said in a statement Tuesday evening.

The tiny nation's native language is "Dorerin Naoero", which is spoken by the vast majority of its approximately 10,000 inhabitants.

"Nauru emerged because

Naoero could not be properly pronounced by foreign tongues, and was changed not by our choice, but for convenience," the government said in a statement explaining the change.

"This name change will be reflected across the country, from the renaming of the national aircraft and ships, to official identity regionally and internationally, including at the United Nations, and across national official records and symbols."

The government must hold a referendum because the name change requires altering the country's constitution.

Germany claimed Nauru as a protectorate from the late 1880s until World War I, when the island was captured by Australian troops. It was jointly administered by Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand before gaining independence in 1968.

Nauru is one of the world's smallest countries, with a mainland measuring just 20 square kilometers (7.7 square miles).

It is especially vulnerable to climate change and has high rates of unemployment and health issues, a recent World Bank assessment said.



Nauru's President David Ranibok Adeang speaks during the General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly at the U.N. headquarters in New York City on September 23, 2025.

Unusually pure phosphate deposits -- a key ingredient in fertilizer -- once made Nauru one of the wealthiest places, per capita, on the planet.

But those supplies have long dried up, and researchers today estimate 80 percent of Nauru has been rendered uninhabitable by mining. □

Bone appetit: Paris pups lap up treats at dog-centric spots

Paris, France

An elegant, white-haired Parisian savours a biscuity cloud of cream and apple down to the last crumb at one of the French capital's many bakeries -- but this client has four legs, not two. Loulou, a fluffy Pomeranian, lets out a satisfied "woof" after polishing off a five-euro (\$5.90) "Le Merveilleux" made from banana puree, cream cheese, apple and beef.

The one-year-old pup is a regular at this dog bakery, where the treats lined up under a glass counter -- like the heart-shaped "Le Mignon" made with sweet potato, cream cheese and blueberry -- look almost good enough for humans to eat.

French owner Clara Zambuto said that adopting Hulk, her three-year-old Pomeranian, inspired her to open the canine-friendly patisserie, where dogs and their humans can indulge side-by-side.

"I'd often go for walks with him... pop into a cafe like a proper Parisian, but he'd soon get bored," said the 26-year-old owner of Casa del Doggo.

"I thought it was a shame there weren't places in Paris where, while you're having a quick coffee, you can also treat your pet," she



added.

"Nowadays our dog is really like our child... we want to be able to take him everywhere," she said.

The bakery is one of several dog-centric establishments popping up in the French capital -- home to an estimated 100,000 canines -- where some say pets' needs remain overlooked.

- 'No chocolate' -

Zambuto started preparing the treats at home herself, before enlisting the help of a trained pastry chef.

"No chocolate, no avocado, no grapes and no onion," she said, as they are

toxic to dogs.

Like for humans, moderation also remains key to avoid excessive weight gain, said Lolita Sommaire, a veterinarian specialising in canine and feline nutrition. "If they've been to a patisserie, you need to adjust their next meal, cut back a little, or get them doing more exercise," she said.

"But if it's once a month, it's not a big deal," she added. At another dog cafe, pups roam on a bench-lined terrace, some munching on four-euro croissant- and baguette-shaped treats.

Marley, a beret-wearing American shepherd, laps

up the remnants of a chantilly-based "pup cup" from the pavement.

For Rebecca Anhalt, the decision to open her "dog-first" cafe came after being hit with a hefty fine for letting Napoleon, her five-year-old whippet, off-leash in a park.

"I wanted to create a place where people could come and not fear... being scolded for having your dog," said the U.S.-born owner of Le Bone Apart, a play on French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte's last name.

- 'Really good connector' - While Paris has more than 40

off-leash spaces for dogs, one advocacy group, Paris Condition Canine, argues that those on offer are "insufficient, unevenly distributed, and sometimes ill-suited".

Dogs even emerged as a niche issue ahead of March's mayoral race, with new Paris mayor Emmanuel Gregoire dedicating an Instagram account to photos with canine companions, while rival Rachida Dati organised a dog-centric "apero".

For Loulou the Pomeranian's owner and self-described "mother", Sarah Elgamal, trips to the Casa del Doggo bakery offer more than just treats but an opportunity to bond with her pooch.

It "improves our connection, because we're both in a third place that's neither work nor home", said the 32-year-old pharmacist.

And though dogs come first at her cafe, Anhalt said many visitors also come for the chance to socialise with fellow pet owners.

"Dogs are a really good connector," she said.

One regular and his 17-year-old dachshund, newly arrived in Paris, now come every day to "be part of the group and meet people", she added.

After all, "you'll talk to anybody about your dog." □



Former Ecuadorian foreign minister Maria Fernanda Espinosa, candidate for the position of U.N. Secretary-General speaks during an interview with AFP outside the United Nations headquarters in New York City on May 13, 2026.

United Nations, United States

The appointment of a woman to the UN's top job is a question of "historical justice" according to Maria Fernanda Espinosa, who is seeking to become the organization's first female leader.

The Ecuadoran former min-

ister of foreign affairs and defense professed her "deep love" for the U.N. as she unveiled her bid to lead it from 2027, joining a growing field of four contenders -- including two other women.

"Some people say it is time" that a woman leads the U.N.,

A woman U.N. leader is 'historical justice,' says Ecuadoran contender for top job

"and I believe it is a matter of historical justice," she told AFP. "But I think it's also an issue of merit, of having the full pool of merit, experience and knowledge to the service of the United Nations."

"We cannot leave half of the world's population outside of that possibility. And I think if we really want change and transformation why not to have, after 80 years, a woman and the right woman leading the organization," she added, pointing to a need for "different perspectives" in dangerous times.

While the world is experiencing a surge of wars in the post-Second World War era, the current selection

process is playing out against a backdrop of political and financial crisis, and accusations of inaction.

Espinosa said that in that context "the U.N. has to adapt to the times we live in right now. It's not the other way around," calling for more ambitious reforms than those announced by outgoing UN boss Antonio Guterres.

- 'Difficult job' -

"What we need is a leader that is hands-on, that has a lot of energy, that knows the system, that can be the first to arrive to prevent a conflict," she said.

She proposed the creation of an "early warning" system to detect and flag signals of

impending conflicts and intervene before they erupt, which she laid out in her "vision" document, submitted with the backing of Antigua and Barbuda.

While she is pushing for a new approach, she is careful not to throw the previous Secretaries-General under the blue bus.

"We should be respectful and careful to say 'the past doesn't work and now...I'm a magician'," she said.

"It's a difficult job, but when you know how to do the job, if you are confident about your leadership style, I think the UN can...look at the 21st Century with more hope and with this sense of possibility." □

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A Double Premiere in Palm Beach: Upstyle Emporium and Little Rose Opened at Palm Beach Plaza Mall

PALM BEACH, ARUBA - Aruba's interior design and collectors' landscape has undergone a sophisticated transformation. Two distinct yet complementary boutiques have opened in the heart of Palm Beach Plaza Mall: Upstyle Emporium and Little Rose. Together, they represent a first-of-its-kind retail concept for Aruba and the wider Caribbean region.

Two Worlds, One Destination

While sharing a passion for history and character, the two stores offer uniquely different experiences tailored to every type of treasure hunter:

* Upstyle Emporium: The island's premier destination for high-end, curated antiques and rare decorative items. From timeless furniture pieces to exquisite period art, Upstyle Emporium is designed for the discerning collector looking to elevate their space with authentic, sophisticated history from Europe and Asia.

* Little Rose: A delightful boutique dedicated to the art of the find. Little Rose offers a high-quality selection of European and Asian vintage curiosities, nostalgic treasures, and charming accents. It is a place where every item tells a story, offering accessible beauty for those who appreciate the soul of vintage living.

A Unique Concept for the Caribbean

This dual opening marks a milestone for the region. "Never before has such a comprehensive collection of history been presented with such meticulous care and aesthetic vision in the Caribbean, offering a serene, gallery-like experience for every visitor." Whether you are searching for a significant investment piece to complete a luxury villa or a unique vintage gift that cannot be found anywhere else, these sister stores ensure there is "something for everyone."

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Step inside and find the piece of history you've been looking for.

Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

(Oranjestad)—Though Aruba's traffic is relatively easy to manage, driving here—especially if it's your first time visiting—can be foreign. To help you out, here's a breakdown of some traffic signs you might encounter on the road.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by

a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, be-

bouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait

until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic. These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

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Best spots to view the sunset

(Oranjestad)—What can be more romantic than surprising your partner with a date watching the sunset? Aruba's sunset leave many speechless, and luckily, the best spots to view the sunset are entirely accessible and easy to find. Here are some of the best places to view the sunset on the island.

California Light House

Of course, being one of the highest points easily accessible to locals and tourists, the California Light House hill not only offers a tremendous view of the sunset, but also a



What Aruba means to Don Alhart!

ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to give you a shout out! Send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island and you can have a chance to be featured in our next issue.

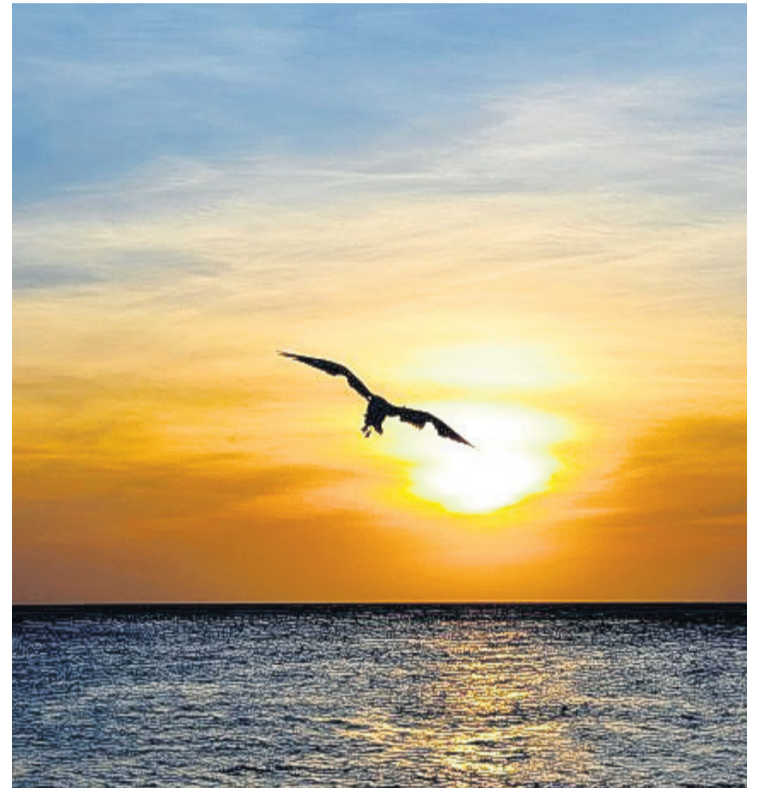
Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, 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 Don Alhart from Pittsford, NY.

He wrote to us saying: "Aruba to me are the happy memories to share after I get home. I took this photo this past March on my Sunday morning walk. To me, it represents the peaceful feeling Aruba brings to my heart."

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



breath taking scenery of most of the island. In the distance you can spot all the hotels, the western shoreline and the wild waves that crash on the northern side of the island.

Manchebo & Eagle Beach

Speaking of the western shoreline, the best spots for viewing the sunset on the beach has to be either Manchebo Beach or at Eagle Beach, which stretch along the entire western coast of the island. The sunset on these beaches is truly breathtaking; the sky and ocean look so big and spacious, and paired with the orange/pink hue of the sunset, the white sandy beaches and the soft sounds of waves crashing—it can only be described as an experience!

Arashi Beach

Another beach that has to be considered as another great spot to view the sunset. Arashi Beach is the last beach you will find along the western coast line, just before you drive up the hill to the California Light House. A favorite for surfers and body boarders, the Arashi sky stretches out for miles, lending a spectacular canvas for the sun to create a masterpiece of orange, pink and purple

Hooiberg Hill

These last two options are for more active couples. If you and your partner like to hike, the Hooiberg Hill may be a great place for you to get your daily workout in and enjoy a beautiful view of the sunset and the island as a little reward. Climb on top the 587-step stairs and reach the top to enjoy this incredible scenery.

Casibari Rock Formation

If you're a rock climber, you might enjoy watching the sunset on top of the Casibari Rock Formation. It's no Yosemite, but it does offer a fun little exercise to get to the top. But if you prefer not to get your hands a little dirty, you can always use the stairs in the back.hue. □

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Birds of Aruba



ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the **Aruba Birdlife Conservation** was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and



descriptions from the foundations Facebook page.

The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm.



Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.

Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory. English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).

Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect. ☐

Feeling parched? Grab refreshment by the side of the road!



(Oranjestad)—Touring the island in the blistering heat can leave one feeling rather thirsty and looking to cool off. Luckily there are a few stands along the roads of Aruba that can offer you just what you need: a nice, refreshing beverage!

These "coconut stands" can be found at several locations on the island, where you can cool off with delicious smoothies, drinks, snacks, and of course, fresh coconuts! Perfect during family outings around the island, these stands can be found in the following locations:

- Near the red Anchor in San Nicolas
- On the Linear Park in Oranjestad (in front of airport runway)
- At the California Light House hill
- Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin
- Bushiribana Beach

Aruba's Bocas: home to the rarest fossil reefs on the planet!

(Oranjestad)—If you've been to the northern coast of Aruba already, you've probably noticed how the ground differs entirely from the sandy beaches on the southern part of the island. These hard surfaces, with sharp bumps and holes are actually fossilized coral reefs, of which its growth and changes can be traced back to the last glacial period.



On May 30 2023, geoscientists, Dr. Patrick Boyden from the Marum research faculty at the University of Bremen, Prof. dr. Alessio Rovere from the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Prof. dr. Gianfranco Scicchitano, from the University of Bari Aldo Moro, presented their research on these fossilized coral reefs at the University of Aruba. Their focus for their research included studying the health and formation patterns of

these coral reefs, and to investigate how these reefs have responded and can respond to fluctuating sea levels or extreme weather, like hurricanes and tsunamis.

Through underwater and

land surveillance, and 3D models of the reefs, they were able to narrow down when these formations started to take place. They were also able to track the fluctuation of sea levels during the past hundred or even thousands of years,

and the effects that this fluctuation has had on the coral reefs of the windward side of Aruba.

These findings can certainly put things into perspective. The ground on which we have walked many times

on the northern part of the island hold such rich history, history that dates back to a time that most of us cannot even imagine. As the scientists themselves have pointed out, these fossilized reefs on the windward side are truly an incredible and rare remnant of geological history, as they provide a clear view of how these reefs have formed.

This research is also important for the future of coral reefs on the island. By studying rising sea levels and climate impact on these coral reefs, we are able to take concrete action in protecting and preserve our coral reefs. So, if you are ever visiting one of the bocas or driving along the northern part of the island, please be conscious to help protect our natural historical remnant. Oh, and wear (coral-friendly) sunscreen! ☐

Papiamentu words and phrases you may want to know!

(Oranjestad)—Aruba is a melting pot of different nationalities, cultures and languages. Primarily for this reason, the average Aruban can understand and speak Dutch, English and Spanish relatively well. However, as much as we pride ourselves in being able to communicate with almost everyone, we cherish our native tongue Papiamentu above all else. Want to learn some common words in our language? Here are a few basic words and phrases that can get you a hat tip from an Aruban.



When you arrive at the airport in Aruba, one of the first words in Papiamentu you may encounter is "Bon bini." Bon bini in Papiamentu means welcome, and is probably the most famous Papiamentu word for tourists.

Hi! Bye!

To be fair, there is no unique way to say "hello" in Papiamentu—at least not officially. We often just use the English "hello" or "hey", or Dutch "hallo" to greet someone. We do however, always follow it up with

"con bay?" or "con ta?" Con bay is a shortened version of "con ta bay?", which essentially means "how are you?"

The word "con" in Papiamentu means "how?" and is pronounced with a rounder "o" sounds, like in the English word "cone". "Ta bay" refers to how you are doing.

When we say goodbye, we use the word "ayo" (not like the Ayo Rock Formation, but also...kinda?). We may also use "te oro", which means "see you later".

Greetings during the day

Most, if not all, languages have different ways to greet according to the time of day, and Papiamentu is no different. Since Papiamentu is heavily influenced from Portuguese and Spanish, some of these phrases may look very familiar.

Bon dia is used in the morning, up to about noon. Bon dia essentially means good morning. The word "bon" means "good", and while "dia" does not directly mean "morning" in English, it is used often to refer to

the morning time.

Bon tardi

In the afternoon to early evening hours, we use "bon tardi" to greet people, which means "good afternoon". "Tardi" actually comes from the word "atardi", which directly translates to "afternoon". However, the shortened "tardi" is used to keep the rhythm on the phrase. And the same could be said for our last greeting of the day.

Bon nochi.

You guessed it, "bon nochi" means "good night". Just

like "tardi", "nochi" is actually the shortened version of the word "anochi".

Yes...no...maybe?

The affirmative and negative expression is very simple in Papiamentu. Just like Spanish, our yeses are "si" and our no's are "no". Pretty easy right? If you want to gain some extra points from younger locals, you can also say "se", which is a more casual affirmative used mostly by the younger generation.

However, do note: some older generations may find this improper and not respectful, so keep that in mind.

Thanks man...

Lastly, a word that we can also say more often is "danki", which means literally "thank you". "Danki" is derived from the Dutch word "bedankt". Though we don't really have a translation for "I appreciate it" in English, we do use "masha danki" to convey the message. "Masha" means "a lot" or "very", so "masha danki" means "thank you very much". ☐

Meet an Aruban trailblazers: Padu Lampe

(Oranjestad)—This week we remember one of our most beloved Aruban giant, Juan Chabaya Lampe—better known as Padu Lampe or Padu del Caribe. As one of the most important and renowned artists in the Aruban cultural sphere, Padu's long career led him to be honored today as "the father of culture."

On April 26th, 1920, Juan Chabaya Lampe "Padu Lampe/Padu del Caribe" was born in Nassaustraat, Oranjestad. He grew up in a happy musical environment, and it is because of this that he developed a love for music. Starting from the age of 12, he was agile in the clarinet, mandolin and cuatro. Henry Lampe, his father, was also a well-known pianist and musician.

In a publication of the informative seminar, "Observer", from august 1st, 1962, Padu's many merits and friendly personality stood out. It was said that he was an excellent pianist with a

personal style and full of surprises. Secondly, though the composer was not too familiar with music theory, he showed innovations in his compositions. Lastly, Padu was a promoter of Creole music around the world.

One of the most important moments in Aruban history, in which he was able to witness first-hand, was the first radio broadcast on the island on March 20th, 1954. Here, he was accompanied by Antillean guitarist Julian Coco and Hubert "Loi" Booi.

In the art world, Padu was also a known painter. During his youth, he made several painting using his unique style. In 1939, he participated in an art exhibit in New York, where he won a bronze medal for his painting "Typical View of Aruba."

Padu remained a popular artist within the Dutch Antilles and the Caribbean as a pianist, singer, author and painter. Padu Lampe was

a local artist who became renowned in Venezuela, Colombia, The U.S. and The Netherlands too. In the 1950s, he sold no less than 50 thousand copies of his long-playing albums (LPs).

Padu Lampe was a multi-faceted artist, inspired by his interest in parapsychology and supernatural phenomenon. He wrote three books in Papiamentu on the subject in 1986, which was published by the Aruban National Printing Press with sponsorship provided by the Prince Bernhard Funds Netherlands Antilles.

Besides that, Padu passed his exam on "Society to Advanced Ethical Hypnosis" in 1964 in New Jersey. He received a certificate as a hypnotician, which gave him the authority to practice hypnosis in some states.

Over the course of his career, he received many accolades and awards in Aruba, Curacao, Venezuela and the Netherlands.



Padu del Caribe passed away on November 29th, 2019, at the age of 99 years old. Padu brought the Aruban culture around the world. His legacy will remain ingrained in the Aruban cultural history, and he will be known forever as one of the most influential trailblazers of our community.

Padu will always be in Aruba's heart, because he had composed various special songs dedicated to the mothers of the island; his song "Sonrisa di un baby" ("A baby's Smile")

has been written in three different languages. Padu also wrote our national anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera", along with Mr. Rufo Wever. This song was approved by the government of Aruba and was named the official anthem of the island in 1976.

Other songs that have been considered as being almost a second anthem for Arubans is the special composition he wrote for his wife Daisy Croes called "Abo so". Daisy later passed away in 1994. □

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

(Oranjestad)—The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins is one of the most visited places by tourists on the island, as it lies along the northern coast line near the mini pool and on the way to the Natural Bridge. Despite its seemingly plain appearance, this ruin represents one of the most important histories of the island: The Aruban Gold Rush.

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by

locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his

father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

At the same time, the Aruban government took immediate actions, and informed Curacao that gold was found. At first, everyone could look for gold, as long as they sold it to the government. However, after some time, the government decided to implement stricter rules and banned local search parties.

Over the years, concession-holding had seen different companies from around the world, all of which used primitive methods to dig and carve out gold from the rocks. Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was no different, but used a unique method that involved grinding the rocks and letting the dust be blown away by the strong northeast wind, leaving



clumps of gold behind. The next step was melting the gold and letting it attach to quicksilver in order to obtain pure gold. All these processes were done at the Bushiribana Gold Mill.

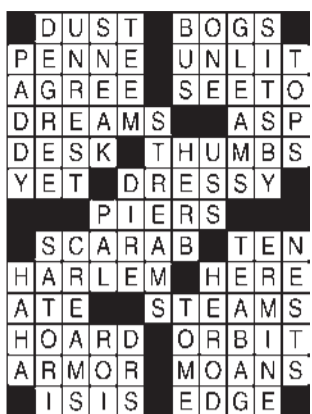
The gold mill itself had a short lifespan: only 10 years in service, but its structure remained relatively solid till this day, and is now a historical remnant. □

Sources: Etnia Nativa



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

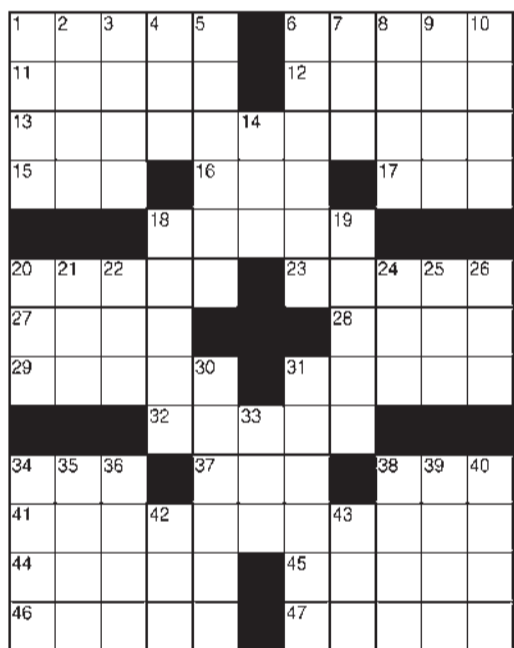


ACROSS

- 1 Syrup source
- 6 Warms up
- 11 Starry hunter
- 12 Houston player
- 13 Heading to sea
- 15 Utter
- 16 Bit of humor
- 17 Buck's mate
- 18 Plentiful
- 20 Spanish resort isle
- 23 Superfluous
- 27 Blowgun ammo
- 28 Lowly worker
- 29 Start
- 31 Female donkey
- 32 Polite
- 34 TV spots
- 37 Quarterback Marino
- 38 Sack
- 41 Job for a judge
- 44 Deeply impressed
- 45 Singer Ronstadt
- 46 Famed fur tycoon
- 47 Finished

DOWN

- 1 Forest growth
- 2 Region
- 3 Feel sorry for
- 4 Auction buy
- 5 Puzzle
- 6 Negotiate a price
- 7 Snaky shape
- 8 Slightly
- 9 Half a sextet
- 10 Foot part
- 14 Afternoon break
- 18 Early Mexican
- 19 Kick out words
- 20 Wedding words
- 21 Prohibit
- 22 Form 1040 org.
- 24 Toe count
- 25 Director Howard
- 26 One or more
- 30 More neat
- 31 Commercial song
- 33 Mover's truck
- 34 China setting
- 35 Bears' lairs
- 36 Sports figure
- 38 Rock group
- 39 Staff member
- 40 Delighted
- 42 Binary base
- 43 Storage site



1-17

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.

1-17

CRYPTOQUOTE

CTM PO KSYT RPV XPMPVT

GRI, SGZ CTM PO KSYT RPV

ZVTSKO MRKRVVRI'O VTSCHMA.

— KSCSCS ARPOSXJSH

Cryptoquote: WE SHALL OVERCOME BECAUSE THE ARC OF THE MORAL UNIVERSE IS LONG, BUT IT BENDS TOWARD JUSTICE. — MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

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.



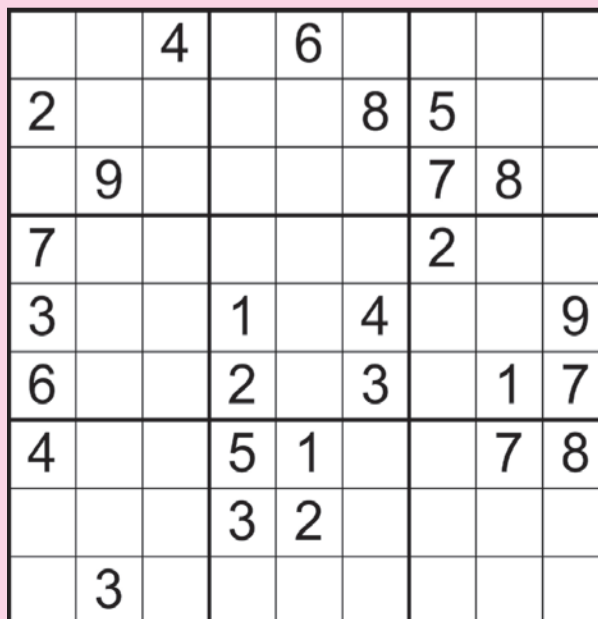
CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

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: ★★★★★

5/15

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

5/14

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Wine consumption slides in 2025



Newly manufactured bottles move around a conveyor belt after being filled with wine at a factory run by British glass containers maker and filler, Encirc, in Elton, north-west England on February 4, 2026.

Paris, France

Wine consumption fell worldwide last year, the industry's trade body said Tuesday, amid changing lifestyles and economic pressure on consumers.

The International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV) said in its annual review that the industry was confronted in 2025 by "a combination of climatic variability, softer demand and rising trade uncertainty".

It found consumption slid by 2.7 percent last year to 208 million hectolitres, taking the cumulative drop since 2018 to 14 percent.

"This evolution reflects the interaction between longer-term changes in consumption patterns and a more difficult economic environment in recent years," said the OIV.

"Evolving lifestyle preferences, shifting social habits and generational changes continue to influence consumer behaviour" in several mature wine markets, it added.

The OIV also noted that the wine industry "has faced a succession of external pressures since 2020, including the Covid-19 pandemic, geopolitical tensions, trade disruptions and inflationary pressures, all of which have weighed on purchasing power and consumer confidence".

It noted that nine of the world's top 10 wine markets recorded lower volumes, and said three markets played an outsized role in the global decline: China, France and the United States.

In the United States, the

world's leading wine market, consumption fell 4.3 percent last year, which the

OIV put down to reduced purchasing power, a reduction in alcohol consumption among younger consumers and a wider selection of alcoholic beverages.

The impact of tariffs imposed by U.S. President Donald Trump is still difficult to isolate among all of those factors, as well as the drop in the value of the US dollar against the euro, OIV's director John Barker told AFP.

He added that it was too early to say what the effects of the Middle East war would be, but acknowledged logistical problems and inflation would "all have eventually some sort of knock-on effects on the wine market".

In France, Europe's biggest market, consumption fell 3.2

percent.

In China, wine consumption fell by 13 percent last year and by 61 percent since 2020. The OIV said wine demand was particularly sensitive to income and price developments in the country. OIV's Barker said economic factors were very important, with inflation boosting production costs and hitting consumers in the pocket.

"Overall you know wine is a discretionary product and people's purchasing power has been impacted," he said. Meanwhile wine production rose 0.6 percent to 227 million hectolitres in 2025, but the OIV noted this was from a historically low level in 2024.

- Need to innovate -

It said the third consecutive year of low global output reflected the "combined effect of climatic volatility

and production adjustments linked to softer demand conditions".

OIV's Barker said the industry is confronted by the need to switch from a volume-driven model to one based on value that puts even more emphasis on the so-called premiumisation of wine -- emphasising its superior quality and exclusivity.

Ananda Roy, vice president at US market research firm Circana, said that the wine industry needs to adapt to changing trends and tastes, such as by offering more no and low-alcohol wines (NoLo), smaller bottles and high-quality bag-in-box wine.

Roy said he is "optimistic the sector will seize the moment and innovate beyond just the label and shape of the bottle".

Barker estimated that NoLo wines currently hold one to two percent of the global market.

"I think that the technology and the understanding of the product is already developing very very quickly," he said. □

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

After the hobbits, director Peter Jackson tackles 'Tintin'

Cannes, France

"The Lord of the Rings" maestro Peter Jackson revealed Wednesday that he is taking on another cult classic -- "Tintin".

The New Zealand director said that he has been working on a script for a film about the boy reporter created by the Belgian cartoonist Herge nearly a century ago.

Jackson said his film would be a sequel to Steven Spielberg's animated film "The Adventures of Tintin" in 2011, which he co-produced.

"The deal was that Steven directs one and I direct another," he said at the Cannes Film Festival, where he received an honorary Palme d'Or lifetime's achievement award Tuesday.

"So Steven did his film, then for 15 years I haven't made mine. I feel very awkward about that," he said. But he hasn't been wasting any time while at Cannes.

In between galas and picking up his prize, "I've been working with Fran (Walsh, his partner) on another Tintin script.

"I'm in the hotel room down the road writing the script



New Zealand director, screenwriter and producer Peter Jackson displays his handprints during an induction ceremony at the Cafe des Palmes at the Palais des Festivals during the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France on May 13, 2026.

and sending pages to New Zealand," he told AFP.

While he refused to say which of the Tintin albums he was drawing on, he hinted strongly that it will begin where Spielberg's film finished, with "Red Rackham's Treasure".

"It's not the way that it carries on, but it begins exactly where the last film ends," he told AFP.

- 'Old fat rebel' -

Jackson said he makes "films that I really want to see myself", and the Tintin movie will be no different.

"When we get a draft done we will send it to Steven (Spielberg)... and he might say that he doesn't like it, and maybe we should do it with different books. But I don't think he will."

Jackson, who turned JRR Tolkien's trilogy into one of

the biggest box office franchises ever, said he loved Tintin, whose adventurous japes in comics like "Tintin in Tibet" and "The Blue Lotus" have been a staple of European children's bookshelves since the 1930s.

Jackson, who owns Weta FX, one of the world's most important special effects companies, which has worked on "Avatar" as well as "The Lord of the Rings"

trilogy, also weighed into the debate on artificial intelligence that has been raging at Cannes.

He said that while he thought AI is "going to destroy the world", when it comes to its use in film, "I don't dislike it at all."

"I mean, to me, it's just a special effect. It's no different from other special effects."

While he later played down his remarks "about the robots taking over", he said he could not see AI going much further than the "cowboyland" of short videos on Instagram and YouTube. "To make feature films the rights have all to be authorised and lawyers have to go through things with a toothcomb," something that would limit AI's use.

Jackson, 64, said he still sees himself as the rebel who was kicked out of the Palais des Festivals in Cannes for wearing shorts when he premiered his debut film, "Bad Taste" in 1987, but was now a "old fat rebel".

And he said he still hopes to make a movie inspired by the British Dambusters raid on the Ruhr dams in Germany during World War II if "I live long enough". □

New 'Godfather' novel to tell mafia story from women's perspective



Adriana Trigiani attends 'From book to screen' panel during the 2016 Greenwich International Film Festival on June 12, 2016 in Greenwich, Connecticut.

New York, United States

A new novel in "The Godfather" literary saga is set for publication in the fall of 2027, the first written by a woman, who will tell the story of the Corleone mafia family from the perspective of its women.

Publisher Random House has acquired the rights to

the book, titled "Connie," written by bestselling author Adriana Trigiani, she announced in a post on Facebook on Wednesday. Connie is the only daughter of Vito Corleone, the fictional mafia patriarch and father of his eventual successor, Michael Corleone. The new book will be the

fourth authorized by the family of Mario Puzo, the author of the original novel, since his death in 1999.

Earlier additions to the saga included "The Godfather Returns" (2004) and "The Godfather's Revenge" (2006), which continued the chronology of the original books.

The series also includes "The Family Corleone" (2012), a standalone prequel set during the Great Depression, years before the events of "The Godfather."

"I enter Mario's world and we're telling it through the women of The Godfather," Trigiani, who has Italian roots, said on Facebook.

Random House did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment, but the publisher has confirmed the book deal to several U.S. media outlets.

"The Godfather is a page turner," Trigiani wrote, "but when I searched for the matriarch, she was sorely missing."

Anthony Puzo, Mario Puzo's son, told Publishers Weekly: "We had been looking for someone to retell the story from a new perspective."

Anthony Puzo, who oversees his father's literary estate, said Trigiani was astonished to learn that the character of Vito, the formidable Corleone family patriarch, was inspired by his grandmother.

Foreign rights have already been sold in eight countries, including France and Germany.

Published in 1969, the first novel in the saga, "The Godfather," sold 21 million copies.

It was adapted into two films by Francis Ford Coppola -- "The Godfather"

(1972) and "The Godfather Part II" (1974), which together won nine Oscars.

A third film, "The Godfather Part III" (1990), was based on an original screenplay.

In 1984, Mario Puzo published "The Sicilian", which is not a sequel to "The Godfather," but a standalone narrative about the Sicilian hero Salvatore Giuliano. □

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Sinner breaks Masters 1000 winning streak record at Italian Open, Gauff in final

Rome, Italy

Jannik Sinner reached the semi-finals of the Italian Open on Thursday after seeing off Andrey Rublev and establishing a new record of consecutive wins in Masters 1000 tournaments.

Another straight-sets victory, this time 6-2, 6-4 over Rublev, moved Sinner up to 32 straight wins in the ATP's top-ranked events, one more than the previous record established by Novak Djokovic in 2011.

"I don't play for records, I play just for my own story," said Sinner on court.

"At the same time, it means a lot to me, but tomorrow is another day, another opponent, a different opponent." Rublev was Sinner's first seeded opponent at this year's tournament in Rome and the world number one made short work of his task in front of a delighted centre court.

On Friday, Sinner could face Daniil Medvedev, winner of the 2023 title at the Foro Italico, with the seventh seed taking on lucky loser Martin Landaluce in the first match of the evening session, which is scheduled to start at 1700GMT.

Sinner looks near unbeatable at the moment and with his great rival Carlos Al-



Italy's Jannik Sinner serves to Russia's Andrey Rublev during the ATP Rome Open tennis tournament at Foro Italico in Rome on May 14, 2026.

caraz out injured he is heavy favourite to become the first Italian to win the Rome title in five decades, with a potential career Grand Slam on the cards at the French Open.

Rublev offered little resistance, the Russian dropping his own serve in the first game of both sets to give Sinner a handy leg-up, and committing 28 unforced errors in 18 games.

Sinner meanwhile showed flashes of his best tennis but also started to look tired to-

wards the end of the match, visibly touching his left thigh before confidently serving for the match.

"It's starting to feel that I've been playing a lot, so I need to recover as much as possible because tomorrow will be very difficult," Sinner later told reporters.

"However it goes it will be a win for me, if I win great but even if things don't go well that OK because I'll have a few more days to prepare for Paris which is my main objective this year."

- Gauff in final -

Coco Gauff followed Sinner by reaching the Rome final for the second straight year after beating veteran Sorana Cirstea 6-4, 6-3. The American star has struggled on clay this season, with a last-16 exit in the Madrid Open coming after a disappointing run to the quarter-finals in Stuttgart. But she dealt with Romanian Cirstea -- who is set to retire at the end of the year -- professionally as Spring

sunshine burst out on centre court, helped by a marked improvement in her often erratic service game.

The 24-year-old made only one double fault and got 79 percent of her first serves in play, and cut a confident figure on court ahead of a potential title clash with a revitalised Iga Swiatek.

Gauff was beaten by Jasmine Paolini in the last year's final but could go one better ahead of her Roland Garros title defence.

Swiatek will bid to reach her first final of the year when she faces Elina Svitolina in the final match of the day on centre court.

A six-time Grand Slam champion, Swiatek has been out of sorts on clay since winning the last of her four French Open titles two years ago, but she has exploded back into her best form in Rome.

Since struggling through her second-round win against Caty McNally, Swiatek has dropped just seven games in three matches and looks back to her best on her preferred surface.

Swiatek recently took on board Francisco Roig, the former coach of men's clay-court icon Rafael Nadal, after a difficult opening few months of the season. □

McIlroy back to the drawing board to solve driving woes



Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland reacts after a putt on the ninth green during the first round of the PGA Championship at Aronimink Golf Club on May 14, 2026 in Newtown, Pennsylvania.

Newtown Square, United States

Rory McIlroy struggled with wayward tee shots in a four-over par 74 start Thursday at the PGA Champi-

onship, then was asked to describe his frustrating round at breezy Aronimink. "Shit," McIlroy said.

Driving woes the world number two thought had

been put behind him roared up again as the six-time major winner from Northern Ireland admitted his aggravation.

"I'm just not driving the ball well enough to give myself enough scoring opportunities," McIlroy said.

"That's pretty frustrating, especially when I pride myself on driving the ball well. I just need to try to figure it out. I honestly thought I had figured it out."

McIlroy, however, found his form in practice and tune-up events came to nought under major pressure.

"Once I get under the gun, it just seems like it starts to go a little bit wayward on me," McIlroy said.

McIlroy struggled off the

tee last month in his victory at the Masters, notably on the final hole where he found pine straw on an adjacent hole and scrambled to salvage a bogey for the triumph.

On Thursday at Aronimink, McIlroy began bogey-birdie on the back nine, then made 10 pars in a row before closing with five bogeys in his last six holes, including the final four in a row.

"I started missing fairways," McIlroy said. "It's hard. I didn't have great angles either. Then obviously you start missing it just off the edges of these greens, it gets tricky."

"I felt like I did OK... then I

just got on that bogey train at the end."

McIlroy said the right pinky toe issue that caused him to cut short a Tuesday practice round was not a factor in the poor performance.

"It has been a problem all year for the most part," McIlroy said of his swing issues. "I miss it right and then I want to try to correct it and then I'll overdo it and I'll miss it left. It's a little bit of back and forth that way."

McIlroy found Aronimink harder than he expected when out of position.

"I got a couple of lies today that were particularly bad. The one on the 10th hole starting off, that's as bad as I've seen. □



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state, Mexico, on May 14, 2026, after the Guadalajara club officially handed over the facilities to FIFA, with the venue set to be renamed "Guadalajara Stadium" during the 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Paris, France

Climate experts challenged FIFA on Thursday after a warning that one in four 2026 World Cup games could take place in very hot conditions as global warming has increased the risk of extreme heat in North America since the US hosted the 1994 tournament.

Concerns about heat already prompted FIFA to mandate a cooling break during each half of the World Cup matches that will take place between June 11 and July 19 in 16 stadiums across the United States, Mexico

and Canada.

"Players and fans face a much higher risk of grueling heat and humidity at the 2026 World Cup compared to the 1994 tournament on the same continent," World Weather Attribution (WWA), a network of climate scientists, said in a statement.

WWA's scientific analysis estimates that 26 of the 104 matches could occur in conditions reaching at least 26C Wet Bulb Globe Temperature (WBGT) -- an index that measures how effectively the human body can cool itself under heat, humidity,

Scientists warn 'gruelling heat' could impact quarter of World Cup games

sun exposure and wind.

At 26C WBGT, the international footballers' union FIFPRO recommends cooling breaks as heat strain becomes a real risk for players. Of those 26 matches, 17 will be played in stadiums with cooling systems, reducing risks for players and fans.

During the 1994 World Cup hosted by the United States, 21 games would have been expected to reach a similar heat threshold, according to WWA.

Five games are expected to be played in conditions of 28C WBGT or higher, a level that FIFPRO says should lead to the delay or postponement of matches until conditions are safer for players and fans.

- 'Cancellation-level heat' -

That risk has nearly doubled compared to the 1994 World Cup.

"It's dangerous for players,

but of course there are also the fans who might gather outdoors and they are at even more risk because they will not be taken care of by a lot of medical doctors," said Friederike Otto, WWA co-founder and climate science professor at Imperial College London.

Three of the 16 stadiums -- in Dallas, Houston and Atlanta -- have air conditioning.

But more than a third of the games with a one in 10 chance of exceeding 26C will take place in venues without air conditioning.

The final, which will be played on July 19 at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, has a one in eight chance of seeing 26C WBGT conditions and a 2.7 percent risk of 28C, according to WWA.

"That the World Cup Final itself -- one of the biggest sporting occasions on the planet -- faces a non-insignificant risk of being played

in 'cancellation-level' heat should be a wake-up call for FIFA and fans," Otto said. United Nations Climate Change executive secretary Simon Stiell lent his voice to the warning on social media. "The risk of dangerous heat has doubled" since 1994, which will put "players and fans at risk", he said.

Stiell added: "We must move faster to protect the game we love and everyone who watches it. That means doubling down on the decisive shift to clean energy."

When contacted by AFP, FIFA outlined the preventive measures it has put in place for the World Cup.

"FIFA will continue to monitor conditions in real time, integrating Wet Bulb Globe Temperature and Heat Index surveillance, and stands ready to apply established contingency protocols should extreme weather events occur," the body listed, among other safeguards. □