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The Apprentice? Vance sticks to business at White House podium

Washington, United States

If it was an audition to succeed Donald Trump in 2028, US Vice President JD Vance was keeping it low-key as he held a briefing at the White House on Tuesday.

"I'm not a potential future candidate, I'm a vice president," the 41-year-old said when a reporter suggested that he would be aiming for the presidency in two years.

"And I really like my job, and I'm going to try to do as good of a job as I can." But no one could ignore the elephant in the room.

Just two weeks earlier the same podium was occupied by Secretary of State Marco Rubio widely viewed as Vance's most likely rival for the 2028 Republican presidential nomination.

The situation increasingly resembles an episode from *The Apprentice*, the blockbuster reality show that made Trump a TV star and helped pave his way to the presidency.

Last week Vance even joked about the similarity himself, when asked about reports that Trump has been polling within the Republican party on whether they prefer Vance or Rubio. "I just don't think it sounds



U.S. Vice President JD Vance speaks during a press briefing in the Brady Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on May 19, 2026.

like the president of the United States to have a televised competition for who would succeed him as his apprentice," Vance said during a May 13 press conference, sparking some laughs.

Rubio has also repeatedly played down talk of a rivalry to head the Republican ticket in 2028.

- 'Marco's right' -

Yet there is growing speculation of a battle ahead. Vance's role as the Republican National Committee's

finance chair has given him grassroots connections and links to potential donors, while Rubio's high-profile foreign policy role under Trump could also be an asset. And on Tuesday all eyes were certainly on whether Vance could repeat Rubio's relaxed performance as a stand-in for White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt, who is on maternity leave.

The vice president even recycled some of Rubio's jokes, saying "Marco's right, this really is chaos!" as

reporters clamored to get his attention.

He also joked about Leavitt, saying he would take her place on the condition "she would be vice president for a couple weeks" when his wife Usha gives birth to their fourth child in July.

But Vance didn't always seem as comfortable as Rubio, repeatedly relying on a seating chart for reporters in the briefing room and often turning to right-wing outlets.

Rubio, by contrast, had free-styled his picks of who

got to ask questions, and even dropped in some classic rap lyrics.

Vance stuck to business, and spent much of his time being forced to defend the creation of a nearly \$1.8 billion fund to compensate Trump allies who believe they were unfairly prosecuted under the Biden administration. He joked at one point that even Hunter Biden, who was convicted of a gun crime before being pardoned by his father Joe Biden shortly before the Democrat left office last year, could avail himself of the fund.

- 'There for the president' -

Vance also talked about the Iran war, saying talks were making "good progress" but that Trump was "locked and loaded" to restart military action if needed. Vance led a delegation to Pakistan last month to meet Iranian officials.

But like Rubio before him, some of Vance's answers also appeared to be aimed at potential voters for 2028. Catholic convert Vance repeatedly referenced his religion and referred to "our Christian heritage as a civilization" echoing his previous endorsement of a Christian nationalist agenda under Trump. □

Harvard announces reform to fight grade inflation

New York, United States

Harvard announced Wednesday it will limit how many top marks professors can give undergraduate students, moving to fight grade inflation at one of America's most storied uni-

versities.

Grade inflation is a problem across American higher education, amid worries that an A, meant to reward outstanding work, loses meaning if most students get one as a matter

of course.

With this kind of inflation, A grades say less to employers and graduate school admissions officers as indicators that a student is an appealing prospect.

The new grading system voted on by professors in recent days and announced Wednesday works like this: in a given course a teacher can award an A to no more than 20 percent of the students, with an allowance for up to four extra A's.

There is no limit to scores of A minus or lower in the new system, which is scheduled to take effect in the academic year starting in the autumn of 2027, Harvard said. Faculty members voted 458 to 201 to use the

new grading scheme.

In the 2024-2025 academic year about two thirds of the grades handed out to undergraduates at Harvard were A's, according to the student handbook. This new system will bring that ratio down to 2010 levels, when a third of grades were A's, the Harvard Gazette student newspaper reported.

Faculty members released a statement welcoming the change.

"This matters for our students above all. A Harvard A grade will now tell them, as well as employers and graduate schools, something real about what a student has achieved," the statement said.

But students do not like the idea, with 85 percent saying they oppose the new system in a poll carried out in February, according to the newspaper.

"This is a consequential vote," said Amanda Claybaugh, the dean of undergraduate education.

"It will, I believe, strengthen the academic culture of Harvard; it will also, I hope, encourage other institutions to confront similar questions with the same level of rigor and courage."

Other top American universities, such as Princeton and Cornell, have also tried to tackle grade inflation in the past but in some cases gave up amid opposition to such a reform. □



Harvard President Alan Garber walks the Tercentenary Theatre processional through Harvard Yard on May 28, 2025 in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

In the online 'maxxing' era, what's the deal with fiber and protein?

New York, United States

First it was protein, now it's fiber: the "maxxing" mindset has permeated social media, as wellness influencers insist that loading up on certain nutrients is the key to vitality and a life-changing gut glow-up.

These viral diet trends rooted in extreme optimization are impacting how people eat and what companies sell but are they actually healthy?

The concept of "protein-maxxing" insists that more is better when it comes to the macronutrient found in foods like meat, dairy and nuts, which is essential to a vast array of bodily functions such as repairing tissue or enhancing immune function.

Meanwhile dietary fiber is on track to be 2026's online trend of choice: ingest as much as possible and you'll be less hungry and more regular, say online advocates who wave bowls of chia seeds and oats at the camera.

Brands have taken note: if you can buy it, there's probably a protein-boosted version of it even the sugariest cereals are touting their high protein content.

And blue chip companies like PepsiCo and Nestle along with newer firms like Olipop are jumping on the bandwagon, highlighting



U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (C) attends an event with farmers on the South Lawn of the White House on March 27, 2026 in Washington, DC.

the fiber content in prebiotic sodas or chips.

"I think fiber will be the next protein," said PepsiCo CEO Ramon Laguarta in an earnings call late last year. A survey from the consulting firm Bain & Company showed nearly half of US consumers are trying to eat more protein.

Across the United States, Europe and Asia, it's Gen Z and Millennial consumers primarily driving the fad, according to the survey.

The same goes for fiber: according to London's GlobalData, 40 percent of Gen Z and 45 percent of Millennials reported they're

trying to improve their gut health.

- More not always best -

Nutritionists say there are grains of truth to the fiber craze.

Andrea Glenn, an assistant professor of nutrition at New York University, called the movement surrounding fiber a "pretty tame wellness trend compared to the other things out there." Samantha Snashall, a registered dietitian at Ohio State University's medical center, said protein has been "the special child" in recent years and fiber has been "pretty undervalued."

"I'm glad it's having some

light shed on it."

But those experts along with Arch Mainous -- a professor of community health and family medicine at the University of Florida, who has researched the use of social media in health communication said more isn't always best, especially when it comes to protein.

Mainous said eating according to the recommended daily values is one thing but "if you say one's good, five's better? I'm not really for that."

He voiced concern that people are putting too much stock in the one-size-fits-all health advice of in-

fluencers.

It's part of a broader trend that has resulted in a "lack of trust in health experts," he said a "I'll do my own research" mentality that has also been fueled by the likes of US Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr, who has spread anti-vaccine misinformation for years.

Few influencers are trained scientists, Mainous said, and many have brand deals or agendas of their own, including products to sell.

- No 'silver bullet' -

So what's an eater to do? First, talk to your physician, Mainous said.

As a general guideline, the American Heart Association says that for many people, a day that includes a combination of foods like a glass of milk, a cup of yogurt, a cup of cooked lentils, and a piece of cooked lean meat or fish approximately the size of a deck of cards will be in the ballpark of the average daily protein target.

Fiber-wise, Glenn said 25-38 grams depending on age and sex is a good goal.

High-fiber foods such as beans, fruits, vegetables, nuts and whole grains like oats or quinoa are linked to lower rates of certain cancers, and can help keep cholesterol and blood sugar in check. □

Airbnb expands into hotels, cars, groceries

San Francisco, United States

Airbnb, facing tighter local regulations on short-term home rentals, announced Wednesday it is adding boutique hotels, car rentals and grocery delivery to its app in a bid to transform itself into a one-stop travel shop.

The rollout marks the latest step in Airbnb's push to capture more of the travel spending that currently flows to competitors like Booking.com and Expedia. This evolution -- 18 years af-

ter the company's scrappy beginnings in San Francisco -- is one of Airbnb's answers to increasingly tough restrictions on short-term rentals in key markets. In December, Spain hit the company with a 65-million-euro (\$75 million) fine over more than 65,000 non-compliant listings, and Barcelona decided not to renew thousands of rental licenses when they expire in 2028.

New York has banned nearly all short-term private rentals since 2023, and

Paris stepped up its crackdown on illegal listings in 2026.

"Travel shouldn't just be convenient. It should be meaningful," CEO Brian Chesky said in a statement. "The best trips help you explore, learn, and come home a little different than when you left."

The updated app adds grocery delivery through Instacart in more than 25 US cities, as well as airport and train station transfers and luggage storage services in more than 160 cities worldwide.



Brian Chesky, CEO, Airbnb, Inc. speaks onstage during the Airbnb 2026 Summer Release keynote on May 20, 2026 in San Francisco, California.

The platform will also offer car rentals, though the company has not yet named its partners. The app is also getting a range of artificial intelligence features, including

a virtual support assistant available in 11 languages. Airbnb posted revenue of \$2.68 billion in the first quarter of 2026, up 18 percent from a year earlier. □

Google wants its search bar to act on your behalf in AI revamp

Mountain View, United States

Google on Tuesday showed off new plans to turn its famous search bar into an AI assistant that can book restaurants, track news and contact businesses just by asking a question.

After three years of struggling to keep up with ChatGPT, Google is racing to roll out artificial intelligence tools that build on its grip over online search.

The company's Gemini AI app now has 900 million monthly users, twice as many as last year. Its AI-powered search feature, AI Mode, is also taking off, with a claimed one billion monthly users worldwide.

On Tuesday, at Google's annual developer conference near its California headquarters in Mountain View, CEO Sundar Pichai unveiled the next step: Gemini Spark, a personal AI agent available starting next week for top-tier subscribers in the United States. Google's search engine will also get a new upgrade for US users this summer: always-on AI agents that can alert you to news, book activities, and manage shopping lists.

The changes to Google search, which the company said were its biggest in 25 years, will also see a widened search box to make

room for more complicated queries people use for chatbots.

"I love how search has become less about individual queries and feels more like an ongoing conversation, giving users deeper insights and connecting you with the vastness of the web," Pichai told journalists.

Many of the features ride a wave of "agentic" AI that has gripped Silicon Valley since Austrian developer Peter Steinberger in late 2025 launched OpenClaw a platform that lets AI book flights, manage emails and build apps from chat prompts.

OpenAI hired OpenClaw's creator earlier this year and the tech giants are now racing to bring agentic features to mainstream users, despite security concerns and the soaring computing costs that come with them. To stay ahead of rivals Anthropic and OpenAI, Google on Tuesday also launched the latest version of its AI model, Gemini 3.5 Flash.

Google says it runs four times faster than top competing models including Anthropic's Claude Opus and OpenAI's ChatGPT 5.5 while performing at a similar level.

The model is now the default across the Gemini

app, AI Mode search and other Google services. A more powerful version, Gemini 3.5 Pro, is expected next month.

Google also announced it was teaming up with OpenAI on one front: to help stop the spread of fake or manipulated content, the ChatGPT maker has adopted SynthID, Google's tool for invisibly watermarking AI-generated images.

- End of clicks? -

Google's growing AI features could spell trouble for news websites and online publishers.

By keeping users inside its own apps and tools, Google makes it less likely that people will click through to outside websites cutting into their traffic and ad revenue.

Google searches already end 58 percent of the time without users clicking on any website, according to a lawsuit filed against the company by Penske Media, which publishes the Hollywood Reporter and Rolling Stone.

In Europe, a major publishers' group has complained to the European Commission, saying Google uses news content to fuel its AI summaries without paying for it. □

Alibaba unveils new AI chip as Nvidia access remains stalled



A woman poses for a selfie next to signage for e-commerce giant Alibaba in the Xuhui district in Shanghai on February 22, 2025.

Beijing, China

Tech giant Alibaba released on Wednesday a new artificial intelligence chip it said performed three times as well as its predecessor, showcasing growing domestic chipmaker prowess as US titan Nvidia struggles for access to China.

Semiconductors have been at the centre of a fierce US-China race for AI supremacy, with Nvidia's most advanced chips banned from sale in China by Washington over national security concerns.

Beijing has in response sought to bolster its self-reliance, pouring resources into promoting its domestic industry and reportedly barring firms from buying Nvidia chips. Alibaba said its new chip, Zhenwu M890, can deliver three times the performance of its predecessor Zhenwu 810E, which is widely believed to match the capabilities of Nvidia's H20.

The H20 is a less powerful version of Nvidia's AI processing units designed specifically for export to China.

A more high-end option, the H200, has been licensed to sell to China from the US side, but its access to the Chinese market appears to have stalled.

Zhang Guobin, founder of Chinese specialist website eetrend.com, said the timing of the Alibaba launch is "extremely precise".

"It's during a window when the prospects of the H200 entering the Chinese market are highly uncertain and Nvidia's business in China has effectively dropped to zero," he told AFP.

Nvidia boss Jensen Huang was part of a US business delegation that travelled to Beijing with President Donald Trump last week.

He said he had not discussed the H200 directly but added "the Chinese government has to decide how much of their local market... they want to protect".

The new Zhenwu M890 chip "provides a reliable option that is insulated from fluctuations in export controls, enabling domestic AI companies to formulate long-term technology roadmaps," said eetrend.com's Zhang.

"At the very least... (it) proves that in the field of high-end AI computing power, China now has a 'Plan B' that does not depend on Nvidia," he added.

However, when it comes to performance, Nvidia still holds its lead.

Even the H200 is significantly less advanced than the firm's top-range chips the Blackwell series and forthcoming Rubin processors.

Alibaba said to date it has shipped more than 560,000 chips in its Zhenwu series, to over 400 customers, including automakers and financial institutions. □



CEO of Google DeepMind, Demis Hassabis, speaks at the 2026 Google I/O technology developer conference in Mountain View, California, on May 19, 2026.

DR Congo fishermen resort to trawling plastic waste

Kinshasa, DR Congo

The mighty Congo River feeds millions of people along its course through the vast Democratic Republic of Congo but fishermen near the capital now find more plastic than fish in their nets.

Some have even ditched fishing altogether because it is more profitable to sell the plastic waste they trawl out of the river, the world's second-most powerful watercourse after the Amazon.

According to government figures, around 60,000 tonnes of fish are taken annually from the Congo, which flows for more than 4,300 kilometres (2,700 miles) east to west through the huge central African country. But in recent years, fishermen on the outskirts of Kinshasa have noticed their catches dwindling.

"A few years ago, I used to catch big fish like captains and catfish but because of the pollution, they've moved further out to sea," fisherman Gilby Mwana-Fioti told AFP.

Since dawn, he and around 20 colleagues have paddled along the riverbanks in their weathered wooden canoes.

The catch is meagre -- small



A fisherman sorts through plastic items collected in a dugout canoe on the banks of the Congo River, surrounded by other boats, in Kinshasa, on April 27, 2026.

fish, lots of plastic bottles and too many used nappies.

"We'll end up disappearing," said Willy Ngepa, who has been a fisherman for more than 40 years in the DRC, one of the poorest countries in the world.

- Alarming pollution levels -

Kinshasa, an overcrowded city of more than 17 million people, churns out at least 10 tonnes of plastic waste every day, according to environmental experts.

Empty plastic bottles pile

up on the kerbs of its pot-holed streets.

The rubbish gets into the watercourses that criss-cross the capital and, from there, finds its way into the Congo River where it harms wildlife and pollutes the water.

According to a study in 2023 by the University of Kinshasa, plastic waste exposed to sunlight breaks down into microplastics, which are then ingested by fish, affecting their growth and reproductive success and sometimes leading to

death.

The microplastics ultimately accumulate in the food chain, harming humans and other creatures that eat the fish.

The waste can also clog the aquatic vegetation where the fish would feed and breed, and contaminate the water on which they depend.

"Plastic pollution has reached alarming levels," said Vincent Kunda, head of Kongo River, an NGO which raises awareness of the scourge.

"Less than 20 percent of waste is processed," he continued.

In 2017, the DRC passed a law banning the manufacture and import of plastic bags and bottles but the regulation remains largely ignored.

Waste collection is virtually non-existent in Kinshasa, due to a chronic lack of local authority funding.

Illegal fly-tips abound, particularly along waterways.

- Survival -

A few kilometres from Kinshasa, small-scale fishing still provides a livelihood for more than 600 families on the small river island of Kim-poko.

Money is scarce and life precarious.

The fishermen, who live in rudimentary wooden houses on stilts, say they now earn no more than \$10 to \$20 a week from catches, compared to \$100 a decade ago.

Charles Moluwa Nzeni Masela, 71, has spent his entire life on the river.

Paddle in hand, he now collects the rubbish that accumulates in the reeds along the swampy banks to sell to recycling companies. □

Japan to sell eels bred in captivity in 'world first'

Tokyo, Japan

Eels bred in captivity will be sold in Japanese shops for the first time, in a move that could ease eventually pressure on the endangered fish, officials said Wednesday.

Eel populations are falling worldwide, scientists say, largely due to factors linked to human activity such as the pollution of waterways, destruction of wetlands, hydroelectric dams, and fishing.

Eel is an enormously popular food in Japan and other parts of Asia.

The fish has proved stubbornly unwilling to reproduce in captivity without intervention, but Japanese researchers succeeded in breeding Japanese eels

from eggs in a laboratory setting in 2010 at great expense.

Since then, they have been trying to reduce the "huge cost... so that the price could be accepted in the market," Yasutaka Okamoto, a fisheries agency official in charge of aquaculture promotion, told AFP.

"With countless small technological breakthroughs, the cost is now some 1,800 yen (\$11) per one baby eel, down from more than a million yen at the initial stages, and down from some 40,000 yen in 2016," he said.

The price is still three to four times higher than a wild baby eel, "but we think it's time to test market reactions," he explained.

The project brought together government researchers, universities and the private sector.

Eel is eaten worldwide but is particularly popular in Japan, where it is called "unagi" and traditionally served grilled and covered in a sticky-sweet sauce.

"If the (Japanese) people didn't love eels so much, we wouldn't go to such lengths to research how to farm them," Okamoto said.

Grilled "kabayaki" using fully farmed eel will be sold from May 29 at a department store in Tokyo and several other outlets including online shops in Japan.

Yamada Suisan, the eel farming company selling

the fish, said it was a world-first, and a "very significant step toward the future commercialisation of fully farmed eel."

Two kabayaki eels will be sold at around 9,000 yen (\$57), a price that is broad-

ly comparable to high-end produce.

Last year, a key global forum that regulates trade in threatened wildlife rejected an EU-led proposal to protect more species of eel. □



This picture taken on October 10, 2025 shows Takayuki Hiranuma, chairman of Hiranuma eel farm posing in front of the fish tanks in Kamisato of Saitama Prefecture.

Tasting Myanmar's coastal cuisine, pushed to the brink by war

Yangon, Myanmar

War has left people hungry in western Myanmar, but conflict-displaced chefs preserve the local flavours of its delicate noodles and briny broth far from a region where conflict blights harvests.

"Seeing my customers enjoy the food until the plate is empty brings me so much joy that nothing else can compare," said Yee Yee Kyaw, who evacuated her restaurant business from Rakhine state to Yangon in 2024.

"Watching from the kitchen, I've even felt it wouldn't even matter if they left without paying," the 27-year-old told AFP.

In Myanmar's civil war, triggered by a 2021 military coup, Rakhine has become a locus of particular suffering.

Bordering Bangladesh and hemmed by mountains and the Bay of Bengal, it has been captured almost completely by ethnic minority rebels, but still sees fierce fighting and has been blockaded by the military along its border.

More than one-third of households in the state suffer food insecurity, and the cost of an average gro-



In this photo taken on May 13, 2026, a woman cooks at a Rakhine traditional food restaurant in Yangon in Yangon.

cery basket has spiked 31 percent due to the Middle East war, according to the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP).

Paddy agriculture has withered and fishing along the plentiful coastline has been curbed by amphibious warfare.

Rice noodles and conger eel are principal ingredients of Rakhine's specialty noodle dish, "mont di", which Yee Yee Kyaw serves in abundance, swirled together in an umami con-

coction of tamarind, garlic and chilli.

But back in Rakhine which the WFP has called "the most acute hotspot for hunger in Myanmar" traditional cooking is secondary to the scramble for daily sustenance.

In Rakhine's Mrauk-U town, housewife May Pu Chay raved about her local gastronomy laced with pungent fish paste and mashed chilli.

"Rakhine food is the best. I would like it to spread,"

said the 51-year-old. "I want everyone to taste Rakhine food."

Her enthusiasm is dulled only by the realities of hardship in Rakhine -- when supplies from her kitchen garden aren't sufficient.

"We have to struggle hard," she said. "If there's nothing to cook, we don't cook. If there is, then we do."

- Hunger for home -

In Yangon, however, Yee Yee Kyaw dispenses about 200 bowls of mont di daily

either as a dry salad with peppery fish soup on the side, or altogether in a steaming conglomeration. Shutting her two restaurants in coastal Sittwe has allowed her to continue cooking in the Rakhine tradition, from a single 34-seat eatery inside a former beauty spa in Myanmar's largest city.

Spice levels range from a tickle on the tongue to a slap in the face, and a serving costs up to 3,500 kyat (\$0.84) depending on your choice of protein: fried beans, pork or fish cake.

Reaching for the authentic flavours of Rakhine made the shop a loss-making enterprise for the first year.

"We tried not to change the taste we had back in Sittwe, but being in a new place, everything is different," she said, recounting the trials of finding ingredients in Yangon markets 500 kilometres (310 miles) from home.

"We are trying hard to preserve the original flavours," Yee Yee Kyaw said.

She has now established a reputation for hand-crafted vermicelli extruding the rice noodles through a giant wooden hand pump directly into water kept on a rolling boil. □

Radio station sorry after mistakenly announcing death of King Charles

London, United Kingdom

A former British pirate radio station on Wednesday apologized "for any distress caused" after acci-

dentally announcing the death of King Charles III.

The erroneous announcement was made on Tuesday afternoon due to a

computer error at its main studio in Maldon in eastern Essex, Radio Caroline said in a post on social media.

The error had triggered the so-called death of a monarch procedure "which all UK stations hold in readiness while hoping not to require", wrote station manager Peter Moore.

"Radio Caroline then fell silent as would be required, which alerted us to restore programming and issue an on-air apology," he said on Facebook post.

"Caroline has been pleased to broadcast Her Majesty the Queen's and now the King's, Christmas message and we hope to

do so for many years to come," he said, referring to the monarch's traditional Christmas Day message to the nation.

"We apologize to HM (his majesty) the king and to our listeners for any distress caused," Moore added.

The mishap on Tuesday came as Charles and Queen Camilla were in Northern Ireland, where they joined a performance with an Irish folk group.

The post did not say how long it was before the mistake was discovered, but the domestic Press Association news agency reported that on Wednesday afternoon, playback for Tuesday's broadcast

between 1:58 pm and 5:00 pm was unavailable on the station's website.

Established in 1964 to challenge the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, Radio Caroline previously operated from ships off the English coast.

After legislation in 1967 forced many pirate broadcasters to close, it continued intermittently before ending offshore broadcasts in 1990.

Caroline and other similar pirate stations inspired the 2009 comedy film "The Boat that Rocked" starring Bill Nighy and Philip Seymour Hoffman about a group of eccentric DJs living and working together at sea. □



Britain's King Charles III (C) attends a garden party at Hillsborough Castle in Hillsborough, Northern Ireland on May 20, 2026, on the second day of a three-day royal visit to Northern Ireland.

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) – Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner
The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick “to-go” breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empanadas early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—



stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch’i rabo (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondongo (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household

to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening “meal” can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences,

most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek (gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights
Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, baskets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun.

*ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao

*Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)

*Saco: Saco literally means “bag”. Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

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Aruba's kite flying tradition

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

The tradition of flying kites starts at home in the weeks leading up to King's Day. These kites were traditionally made with things found in the nearby *mondi** and in the kitchen at home. Using dried up cactus sticks for the frame, old news papers, and glue made from flour, water and salt to dry faster (some people even use cornstarch slurry as glue),



kids usually make their own kites with their friends, parents or other close family members. Tails are made from old bed sheets, ripped

and tied together to create a long string of fabric trailing behind the back end of the kite. To finish off the process, people used fish

lines or thin rope to tie three corners of the kite together. Another long string of rope is tied in the knotted center and bundled up, used to

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

People usually fly their kites in big open fields, like empty soccer and baseball fields found all around the island around noon, when the sun is at its brightest. In the past few years, kite flying has become a sport in which groups of people would battle against each other to see whose kite is the biggest, the prettiest, and whose could fly flawlessly and longer in the air.

*Mondi: Aruban woods.

Aruban government launches website allowing passengers to verify official taxi fares



Minister of Justice, Integration, Energy and Public Transport, Arthur Dowers, officially announced the launch of a website to help regulate and control taxi prices in Aruba.

The new system is based on an official fare list that can be checked on the website taxi.aw. The platform allows users to enter their departure point and destination in order to calculate the distance and the official fare that a taxi driver is required to charge.

Although an official fare list

already existed, the previous version was very outdated and created confusion among both drivers and customers. The lack of updates and easy access to the official fares contributed to situations where some taxi drivers charged arbitrary or excessive prices, particularly in tourist areas.

The government considers the modernization of the system necessary in order to adapt to Aruba's current reality and provide greater protection for consumers. The new fare list was revised after consultations and dis-

cussions with different representatives from the taxi and public transportation sector.

The fare is calculated based on the distance and number of kilometers between different locations on the island. The digital system allows customers to use the same calculation to determine the official fare that the taxi driver must charge during a trip.

The website also incorporates different surcharges that officially form part of Aruba's taxi system. For ex-

ample, trips that begin at Queen Beatrix International Airport include an additional USD 10 fee added before the distance fare is calculated. Trips departing from the cruise port also include a similar surcharge.

With the taxi.aw website, passengers will be able to verify how much a trip should cost and compare this with the amount the driver is charging.

The experience of tourists and Aruba's reputation as a tourist destination were considered important factors in the decision to modernize the system. With taxi.aw, the government wants to eliminate much of the uncertainty that previously existed. The platform allows both tourists and residents to have direct access to official fares without having to rely solely on verbal

information.

The new fare list will officially take effect this coming Friday.

The introduction of taxi.aw marks an important step in the government's efforts to modernize and better regulate Aruba's public transportation sector. With greater transparency, direct access to official fares, and stricter enforcement of regulations, the government hopes that both residents and tourists will benefit from a more reliable and professional taxi system. The government emphasized that the ultimate goal is to protect consumers, strengthen Aruba's reputation as a tourist destination, and create a fairer environment for drivers who operate according to the law.

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Adriaan Laclé: One of Aruba's richest men in the twentieth century

(Oranjestad)—The name Adriaan Laclé may ring a bell to locals as one of the main roads on the island, but about a century ago, Adriaan Laclé was a rich businessman, well-known for his generosity, wealth, and taste.

Adriaan was born in 1866 and was the eldest of six children. Not much is known about his childhood upbringing or any of his earlier business ordeals, but during his hay day he often helped people get loans, was a well-established trader, and owned several plots of land. In fact, he commissioned the construction of the famous La

Quinta Carmen manor—now a restaurant. Though he himself never lived in the beautiful manor, his own house also reflected his success and good taste. Today his house still stands in good condition and can be found in the back streets of main street Oranjestad.

Regarding his personal life, it has been said that he was married twice during his lifetime. He had his first daughter during his first marriage but lost his wife soon after her birth. During his second marriage, he fathered 16 children. However, it has been said that only 11 of those 17 made it past 18 years of age.

Perhaps two of his most well-known daughters are Maria Monica Laclé and Maria Veneranda Laclé, who went on to marry successful brothers Eloy Arends and Maximilian Arends, respectively. Their houses are still standing; Eloy and Maria Monica's mansion functions as the townhall, used to host civil marriages, while Maximilian and Maria Veneranda's house stands on the opposite side of the road to them—though currently under renovation after years left in ruin.

Source: De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba) by Evert Bongers.



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



(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.

Caya Betico Croes, mostly referred to as our "main street" has been developed into a pollution-free pedestrian mall. The double-decker offers you a 360 degree view of the downtown 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 interna-

tional 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.

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!

Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)
According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are



donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)
The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national symbol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day



until all the eggs are laid – a shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive.

The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas – an invasive species introduced by humans as pets – and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)
The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

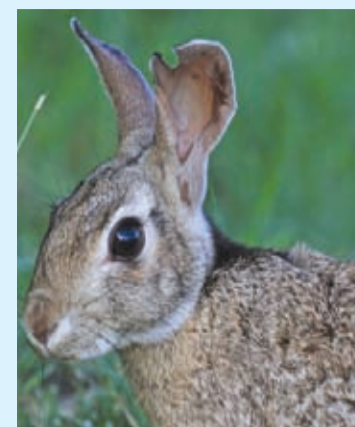
The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the under-

side of the body is a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Coneu (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigro-nuchalis*)
The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian settlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Coneu, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Coneu can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Coneu has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2 to 3 months old. A female



rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 liters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Coneu is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Coneu is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Coneu can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits. These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect.



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

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

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

The restaurant was probably most iconic for its Javanese-inspired exterior with its pointy, slanted roofs. However, the first version of Bali did not look like that at all but was still considered as one of the most popular restaurants on the island



at the time. The restaurant saw three different owners during its existence, during which it underwent various renovations and rebranding.

In 1964, the restaurant was taken over by Karel “Carl” Schmand. Over the years, the restaurant needed constant renovation and

repair, mainly due to its vulnerability to leaks and the unstable pillars underneath the foundation. However, the biggest change made to the restaurant happened in the year 1970—still under the ownership of Schmand, when it got its iconic pointy roofs. The restaurant was also expanded to host a total of 85 guests. This was

“The New Bali”, who had its official (re)opening in 1972. After 1972, when Ronny Schmand took over, the restaurant saw yet another expansion; this time complete with a long bar and dance floor, where guests enjoyed live music from legendary Aruban musician and composer, Toti Arends.

After 1989, the restaurant was again handed over to other owners, and since then suffered from unstable pillars underneath the foundation, resulting in various leaks and overflowing of water into the restaurant. And as most great things come to an end, so did the survival and maintenance of the Bali Restaurant. However, folks today reminisce its legacy, and it's now considered a lost monument.

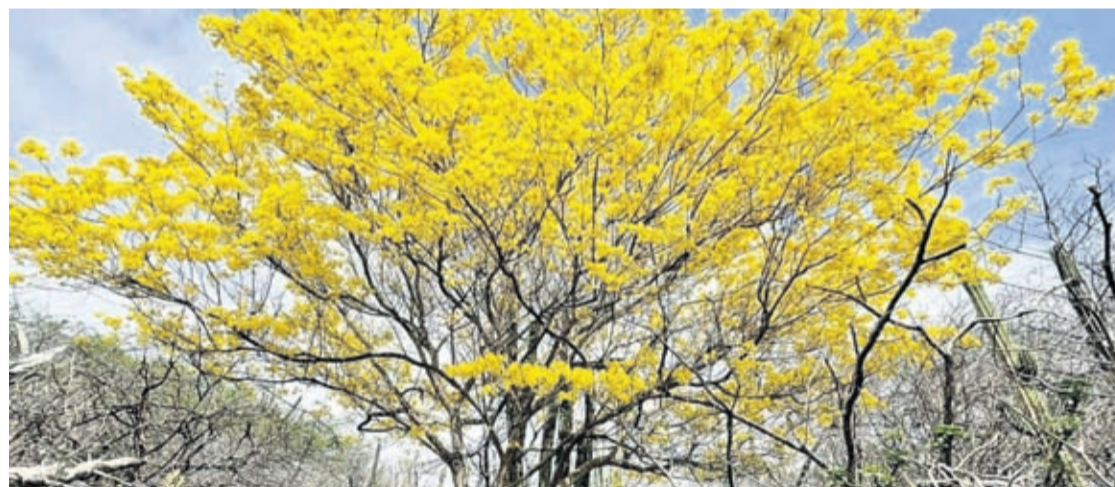
Be a part of the conversation: if you or any family member of yours have a memory of the Bali restaurant, whether it be a picture or just a story, share it with us! We would love to see this legendary hot spot through the lens of our visitors!

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

The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

ORANJESTAD—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: “kibra” (break) “hacha” (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its neighboring trees to starts blooming first.



The legend of the Kibrahacha

Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)
One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudawechea, who was an epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted no time and went to go fetch Kudawechea. Upon telling Kudawechea that her father

was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aterima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudawechea was determined to bring back Aterima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the

tree, they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudawechea, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora and fauna, told Aterima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aterima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start. To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aterima continued plucking with enthusiasm

and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers.

Kudawechea, satisfied to see Aterima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

Upon arriving back at the hut, Aterima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aterima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns.

CROSSWORD

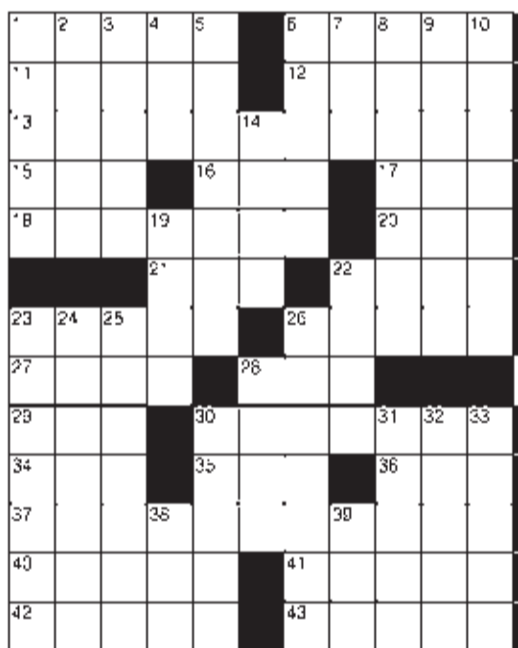
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS** 37 False
 1 Bring friend together
 6 Istanbul natives
 11 Network points
 12 "Looks — everything"

- DOWN**
 1 Hungry, probably
 2 Like Thor and Odin
 3 Pop stars
 4 Wallet bill
 5 Art lover
 6 Jeer at
 7 Coffee dispenser
 8 Tourists' cars
 9 Patella
 10 City ways



- 14 Quite un- 28 Crooked
 common 30 Brake
 19 Hangs low shapes
 22 Beach 31 Cavalry
 cover weapon
 23 Circus 32 Put in
 star office
 24 Time of 33 Grows
 delivery, perhaps weary
 25 Facets 38 Young
 26 Adjust fox
 to new 39 Life story,
 conditions for short



AXYDLBAAXR
 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.

1-24 CRYPTOQUOTE
 YDU XYYL VSHDX IMYTV
 RTKHN — ZSUD HV SHVK PYT.
 PYT EUUW DY JIHD. — MYM
 RIQWUP

Cryptoquote: FOR WHATEVER WE LOSE (LIKE A YOU OR A ME), IT'S ALWAYS OUR SELF WE FIND IN THE SEA. — E.E. CUMMINGS

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 occur, 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 Arrival: 08:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: B CARNIVAL MAGIC 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 Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
19 TUE	ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
20 WED	ALLURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: I CARNIVAL VISTA Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: C
21 THU	CARNIVAL VENEZIA Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
26 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS 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: ★★★

5/21

Answer to previous puzzle



Difficulty: ★★★

5/20

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Whale of a time: Humpbacks set new distance record



A humpback whale is seen during a Nas Mares social business expedition designed to give children from the Favela Radical NGO, their first whale-watching experience by boat, off the coast of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on July 15, 2025.

Paris, France

Two humpback whales have set new records for the longest-known distances travelled for their species by embarking on a journey of over 14,000 kilometers between Brazil and Australia, scientists said Wednesday. The international team of researchers were able to piece together the separate odysseys from photos of the whales' tails including some taken by amateur photographers on cruises captured decades apart.

These journeys through open water are "something that had never been documented before", Cristina Castro, a marine biologist at the Pacific Whale Foundation in Ecuador, told AFP. "It's not unheard of for an individual to occasionally stray (from a migratory route), but what we documented here goes far beyond that," added the lead author of a new study in Royal Society Open Science.

Every humpback has a pattern on the underside of their tail or fluke that is unique "like a human fingerprint", Castro said. The scientists analyzed more than 19,000 photos taken between 1984 and 2005 in eastern Australia and Latin America using an image recognition algorithm.

Then they sifted through each potential match to

trace the two whales' journey across the world. The first humpback was initially photographed in 2007 in Hervey Bay, in the state of Queensland on Australia's east coast. It was spotted at the same place again in 2013. Its unique fluke next popped up six years later -- this time off the coast of the Brazilian megacity Sao Paulo. As the crow flies, this is a distance of around 14,200 km (8,800 miles). Because the scientists only know the start and end points of the journey, it was impossible to determine the whale's exact route or how far it actually travelled. The second whale made the opposite journey. First it was photographed off the coast of Bahia, Brazil in 2003 with eight other adult humpbacks.

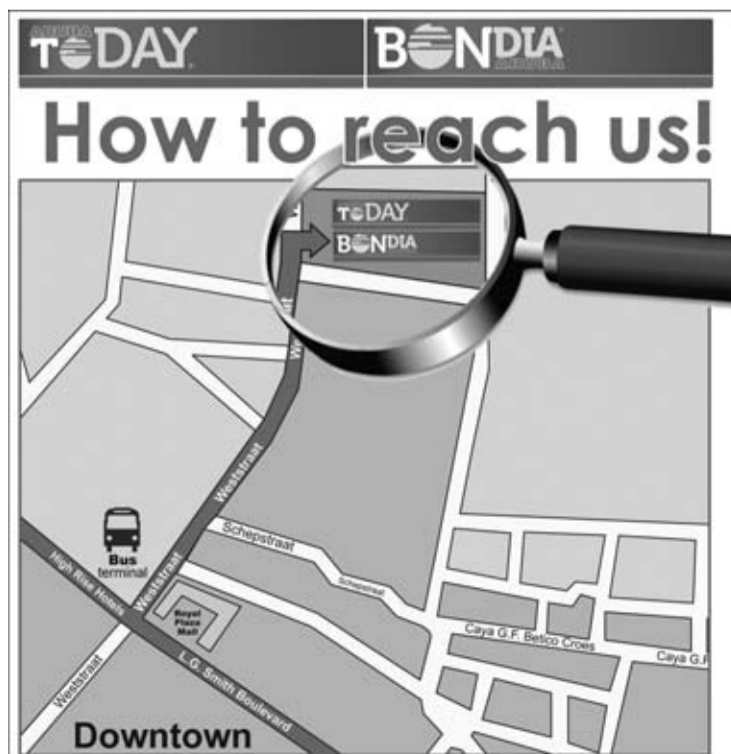
Nearly a quarter of a century later, in 2025, it was spotted in Hervey Bay a distance of 15,100 km. The previous humpback travel record was held by a whale that swam more than 13,000 km from Colombia's Pacific coast to Zanzibar off eastern Africa.

- 'Remarkable singers' -

Humpback whales in the Southern Hemisphere live in well-defined pods and usually follow the same migratory routes every year, travelling between feeding areas in cold water and breeding grounds in the tropics. "Mothers actually teach these routes to their calves when they are young, so the patterns are deeply ingrained," Castro said. The scientists suggested several theories for why these two humpbacks embarked on such "exceptional" deviations from the normal routes. Changes in the ocean, including some caused by human-driven climate change, "could be altering migration corridors in ways we don't yet fully understand", Castro said.

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

Elephant in the room: Nepal's first Cannes film takes on taboos

Cannes, France

Film director Abinash Bikram Shah has taken on two of Nepal's touchiest subjects in "Elephants in the Fog" the way it treats its trans women and its wild elephants.

It seems an odd combination, but the two come together in his hauntingly beautiful directorial debut at the Cannes Film Festival about the perils of not acknowledging nature both human and animal.

Shah the first Nepali to make the festival's official selection is no provocateur. So soft spoken you have to lean in to hear him, he used to work for the Nepal Tourism Board, promoting the stunning Himalayan nation.

But as he told AFP before its premiere Wednesday, "Nepal is changing" in very big ways.

Last year the arthritic old order was toppled by a youth revolution, with Gen-Z protesters taking to the streets with the Jolly Roger flag from the manga "One



Nepalese director and screenwriter Abinash Bikram Shah poses during a photocall of the film "Les Elephants dans la brume" (Elephants in the Fog) at the 79th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France on May 20, 2026.

Piece".

Then in March Nepalis elected 36-year-old rapper Balendra Shah prime minister the world's youngest by a landslide.

- Ancient third gender -

Filmmaker Shah no relation is proud and excited for his homeland.

Nepal is also one of fewer than two dozen nations

that recognise a third gender, and a pioneer on LG-BTQ+ rights in Asia.

But Shah said much of that tolerance "is just on paper". And he wonders how his touching thriller will be received back home.

It centres on the matriarch of a traditional transsexual household in the south of the country where villagers battle nightly to scare

off wild elephants from the shrinking forests that surround it.

The Kinnar community, called Hijra or the third sex in India, has ancient cultural and religious roots in the subcontinent, both in Hinduism and Islam.

They sing and dance and their blessings are auspicious for births and weddings or to scare off evil

spirits.

Gender realignment is called "emasculatation" in Nepal, Shah said, but the Kinnar "have another very beautiful word for it, 'Nirvana.'"

Many live together in strictly organised Kinnar families, he said, each led by a mother who in turn looks to a Kinnar guru.

- Ignoring the haters -

Shah became obsessed by their little-known inner lives as he scrolled TikTok during lockdown.

He was hugely taken by the "joyful videos they posted -- singing, dancing, joking", but also by their collective courage in the face of "so many shocking hate remarks".

Most Nepalese people "see Kinnar just as having this ability to bless them or as prostitutes", he said.

So he is delighted that so far the reaction to the trailer for "Elephants in the Fog" has been positive.

"Either something is changed or they don't realise it's a trans woman," he said, as it features the remarkable Kinnar activist Pushpa Thing Lama. □



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Taiwan author wins International Booker for 'slyly sophisticated' novel

London, United Kingdom Taiwanese author Yang Shuang-zi and translator Lin King won the International Booker Prize on Tuesday for "Taiwan Travelogue", a playful postcolonial novel with a culinary bent.

The prestigious award, which was handed out in a ceremony at London's Tate Modern gallery, recognises works of fiction from around the world that have been translated into English.

"Taiwan Travelogue" is the first book translated from Mandarin Chinese to win the award, and Yang, born in 1984, is the first Taiwanese winner of the prize, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary.

It "pulls off an incredible double feat: it succeeds as both a romance and an incisive postcolonial novel," said Brown. "It's a captivating, slyly sophisticated novel."



Lin King, the Taiwanese-U.S. translator of 'Taiwan Travelogue', by Taiwanese writer Yang Shuang-zi, poses on the red carpet upon arrival to attend the International Booker Prize 2026 award announcement ceremony at Tate Modern in central London on May 19, 2026.

Set in 1930s Japan-controlled Taiwan, the book poses as a translation of a rediscovered Japanese travel memoir penned by fictional writer Aoyama Chizuko.

It traces Chizuko's travels and gastronomic adventures across the colonial outpost, and the intimate relationship she develops with her Taiwanese interpreter Chizuru.

"This is a book that surprises and isn't perhaps what it seems like on the surface," said chair of the judges Natasha Brown.

The book beat out a story about a suburban witch by French novelist and playwright Marie NDiaye as well as Brazilian Ana Paula Maia's dystopian read about a brutal prison colony.

The other shortlisted works were "The Nights Are Quiet In Tehran" by German writer Shida Bazayr, "She Who Remains" by Bulgarian poet and writer Rene Karabash, and "The Director" by German-Austrian writer Daniel Kehlmann, the only male author on the list. □

Djokovic trying to hold back time at French Open

Paris, France

Novak Djokovic arrives at Roland Garros this year facing a familiar opponent, but one that cannot be outmanoeuvred even by the record 24-time Grand Slam champion: time.

The Serbian, who turns 39 this week, is no longer the immovable presence he once was, his famed durability now increasingly a concern in a sport shaped by younger, physically explosive rivals.

The question is not simply whether he can win another French Open, but how he continues to adjust his game and mindset to defy the natural erosion that comes with advancing years.

While his scheduling is more selective and his approach more pragmatic, Djokovic conceded he would have liked more time on clay before coming to Paris.

He has played in just three tournaments in 2026, and lost his only match on clay to Croatian qualifier Dino Prizmic at this month's Italian Open.

Djokovic pulled out of tournaments in Miami, Monte Carlo and Madrid while dealing with a shoulder injury with strapping visible during his brief stay in Rome.

"It's not an ideal preparation, to be honest," said



Serbia's Novak Djokovic gestures as he leaves the court following his men's singles match against Croatia's Dino Prizmic as part of the WTA Rome Open tennis tournament at the Foro Italico in Rome on May 8, 2026.

Djokovic, who will be seeded third at Roland Garros. "I don't recall the last time I had in the last couple of years a preparation where I didn't have any kind of physical issues or health issues coming into the tournament. There's always something. Kind of a new reality that I have to deal with."

It is a candid admission from a player who has built his career on meticulous planning and physical resilience, but who is confronting the realities of an ageing body.

"It is frustrating," he said. "At the same time it's my

decision to still perform in that kind of state and conditions."

Djokovic's record at Roland Garros underlines why he cannot be discounted. The absence of defending two-time champion Carlos Alcaraz is another factor in his favour.

A three-time French Open champion and one of the few players to consistently trouble Rafael Nadal on the surface, Djokovic has reached the quarter-finals or better at each edition since a third-round loss in 2009.

- 'I see what I'm missing' -

But the physical demands of clay are unforgiving, and Djokovic is acutely aware of the marginal losses that come with age.

"I see what I'm missing," he said. "Late half a step. I'm not definitely where I want to be for the highest level and to compete at the highest level and to be able to get far."

Recent seasons have also shown the growing challenge of sustaining peak performance over the two-week grind of a Grand Slam. Matches that once tilted towards him now demand sustained excellence from first point to last.

His preparation, as he openly acknowledges, has limits. "I train hard. I train as much as the body allows me to," he said. "Then how it turns out on the court, that's really unpredictable."

However, Djokovic is one of just two men to beat red-hot title favourite Jannik Sinner this season, having ended his Australian Open reign.

Djokovic delivered what he called one of his best performances in a decade to outlast the Italian in five sets in the semi-finals in January, fired up by those who had written him off.

"I never stopped doubting. I never stopped believing in myself," said the former world number one at the time.

"There's a lot of people that doubt me. I see there is a lot of experts all of a sudden that wanted to retire me or have retired me many times the last couple of years.

"I want to thank them all because they gave me strength. They gave me motivation to prove them wrong."

Djokovic would go on to lose to Alcaraz in the final and has not added to his Grand Slam haul since the 2023 U.S. Open but it would be foolish to dismiss him again, as he has proved many times over. □

In-form Narvaez makes it three Giro stage wins

Chiavari, Italy

Jhonatan Narvaez won the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday, his third win of this year's renewal as Afonso Eulalio retained the overall lead. Ecuadorian Narvaez, who rides for injury-hit UAE Team Emirates, accelerated to the line in Chiavari after 196 kilometres of riding.

That burst by the 29-year-old followed an attack by Enric Mas on the final climb which separated the pair from the rest of a small breakaway group.

Mas admitted afterwards that it was "impossible" to beat Narvaez in the final sprint after failing to shake him off over the final few kilometres.

"Enric was stronger than me on the climbs, I knew I had to play my own game... Michael Phelps doesn't run, he's a swimmer, right?" said Narvaez. Narvaez's impressive showing at this year's Giro comes after he missed the entire Spring after suffering vertebrae fractures in a crash during the Tour

Down Under in January. UAE have won four stages in this year's Giro despite three key riders Adam Yates, Jay Vine and Marc Soler abandoning the race.

It was a stage for the breakaway group as the general classification contenders kept their powder dry in the peloton on a tough stage featuring three categorised climbs.

Pre-race favourite Jonas Vingegaard still trails Eulalio by 27 seconds in the



XRG Ecuadorian rider Jhonatan Narvaez crosses the finish line and wins ahead of Movistar Team Spanish rider Enric Mas the 11th stage of the Giro d'Italia 2026 - Tour of Italy cycling race between Porcari and Chiavari, Italy, on May 20, 2026.

overall standings, a gap which is unlikely to be cut during Thursday's 12th stage between Imperia and Novi Liguri.

The sprinters should have a chance to shine on that 175km stage which is largely flat but also has two categorised climbs. □

Knicks rally from 22 points down to stun Cavs in NBA East finals opener

New York, United States
The New York Knicks, fueled by 38 points from Jalen Brunson, erased a 22-point fourth-quarter deficit to stun the Cleveland Cavaliers 115-104 in overtime Monday in game one of the NBA Eastern Conference finals.

The Knicks looked done for when they trailed 93-71 with 7:52 left in regulation. But Brunson spearheaded an 18-1 New York run and banked in a floater to tie it at 101-101 with 19.3 seconds left in regulation. When Cleveland's Sam Merrill missed a three-pointer they went to the extra session in which the Knicks scored the first nine points.



Miles McBride #2 of the New York Knicks works against Donovan Mitchell #45 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during the first quarter in Game One of the NBA Eastern Conference Finals at Madison Square Garden on May 19, 2026 in New York City.

Brunson admitted he did not know how the Knicks had pulled off the sensational comeback.

"I don't have an answer for you," he told broadcaster ESPN.

"We got some stops. We kept fighting, kept believing, just kept chipping away."

"They were playing great basketball and we just found a way."

Mikal Bridges added 18 points, and OG Anunoby, back from a two-game injury absence, was one of three Knicks players with 13.

Donovan Mitchell scored 29 points to lead the Cavaliers and James Harden added 15.

The Knicks will have a chance to double their lead in the best-of-seven series when they host game two on Thursday.

The winner of the series will face either the defending champion Oklahoma City Thunder or San Antonio Spurs in the championship series.

The Spurs, fueled by a 41-point performance by Victor Wembanyama, beat the Thunder in double-overtime in game one of the Western Conference finals.

It is the first time in NBA history that the first games in both conference finals have been decided in overtime.

Rust may have played a role in a sluggish Knicks start. New York had been off for nine days after sweeping the Philadelphia 76ers in the second round. The Cavaliers, meanwhile, were battle tested if not rested, having polished off a second straight seven-game series with a triumph at top-seeded Detroit on Sunday.

A three-pointer by Mitchell saw Cleveland emerge from a back-and-forth first half with a 48-46 lead, and the Cavaliers pulled away relentlessly in the second half as the Madison Square Garden crowd looked on in stunned, silent disbelief. □



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