

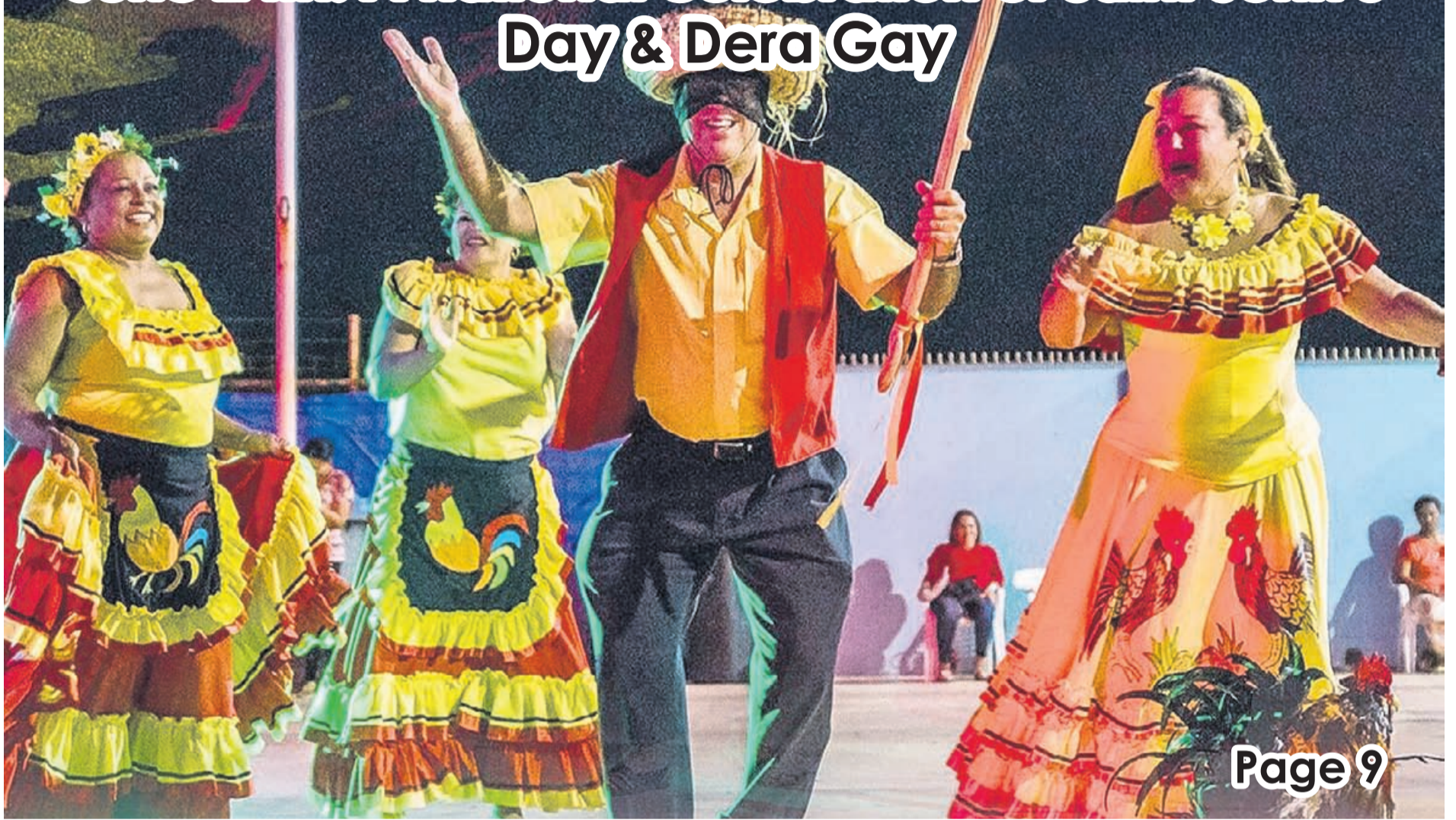
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## America's 250th anniversary celebrations get Trumped

**Washington, United States**  
 U.S. President Donald Trump has tried his best to ensure that America's 250th birthday celebrations revolve around one man -- Donald Trump. In a country whose founding fathers declared there should be "no kings in America," the 47th president has other ideas.

Trump has canceled a planned Independence Day event on July 4 in Washington to stage his own "Make America Great Again" rally. He has staged a huge mixed martial arts fight on the White House lawn and is also set to speak at a "Great American State Fair" in the U.S. capital on Wednesday.

For the former property tycoon and reality TV star, taking center stage is in his blood.

"I ended up getting the Olympics and getting FIFA -- and we got 250 too," Trump said earlier this month, referring to a series of major events taking place during his second presidency.

"I want to take credit for 250 years but that I'm not gonna get away with!" he then joked -- though with Trump, many a true word is said in jest.

"Trump likes the spotlight, and I think he's trying to take the spotlight," Peter Loge, director of George Wash-



**U.S. President Donald Trump stops to speak to reporters after landing at Reading Regional Airport on June 23, 2026 in Reading, Pennsylvania.**

ington University's School of Media, told AFP.

"I think that's unfortunate, because the United States is an ideal and an idea that we keep trying living up to. Donald Trump is trying to say 'I am the embodiment of the idea' -- but by claiming that he is running counter to the idea of the United States."

**- 'Golden age' -**

For many Americans, Trump's idea of America as it turns 250 years old is very different from their own.

A half dozen recent polls collated by USA Today as the country approaches the anniversary of the Declaration of Independence showed a majority believed the coun-

try's best years were behind it.

Most were also dissatisfied with its present state and pessimistic about its future. Trump, 80, has bragged of bringing a new "golden age," but his America is a deeply divided country that is trying to extricate itself from an unpopular war in Iran. The oldest U.S. president ever to be inaugurated is also deeply unpopular, with mounting voter anxiety about the cost of living fueled by the conflict with Tehran.

But Trump appears increasingly consumed by leaving a legacy with his name splashed all over it.

He has promised "the most spectacular TRUMP RALLY of them all" in Washington on July 4, after canceling the bipartisan celebration when several musical artists pulled out citing its politicized nature. Trump will even control the playlist at the event.

Add to that the string of renovations that Trump is making to Washington in the country's 250th anniversary year.

The projects include a giant White House ballroom and a triumphal arch -- plus the Reflecting Pool by the Lincoln Memorial, which is currently beset by algae and peeling paint after a multi-million-dollar upgrade.

**- 'Leaning into it' -**

Trump has frequently compared himself to Abraham Lincoln and the other great presidents from the past 250 years going back as far as George Washington.

Plans are even afoot to put Trump's face on a special \$250 dollar bill to mark the anniversary, breaking a tradition of having only late presidents on US banknotes. Commentators have noted how different the occasion feels from America's bicentennial celebrations in 1976, which appeared to unify the country in patriotism after a difficult few years of Vietnam, Nixon and the oil crisis. But Tevi Troy, a senior fellow at the Ronald Reagan Institute, said there was still a chance the 250th -- or semi-quincentennial -- celebrations could do the same.

"I know that as a nation, we've taken some hits to our patriotic spirit for the last few decades, and I don't know that this semiquincentennial will be able to accomplish that, but that is the hope," Troy told AFP.

Despite his brash tendencies, Trump was also far from the first president to enjoy a bit of glitz.

"Is Trump leaning into it? Sure. Did Gerald Ford lean into it? Yeah," Troy said.

"The question is: is the way Trump leans into it something that will end up being unifying to this nation and bring people together?" □

## China displaces U.S. for world's fastest supercomputer crown

**Washington, United States**  
 A Chinese machine has seized the title of world's most powerful supercomputer, ending nearly a decade of US dominance and underscoring Beijing's drive to build advanced computing power with homegrown technology. The system, called LineShine, topped the closely watched TOP500 ranking unveiled Monday

at the major computing ISC conference in Hamburg, Germany.

It is the first time since 2017 that a Chinese supercomputer has led the list, which has been published twice a year since 1993 and serves as an informal scoreboard for the world's computing superpowers. LineShine knocked the previous champion, the US Energy Depart-

ment's El Capitan, into second place.

Located in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, the machine hit a sustained speed of 2.2 "exaflops" -- a measure of how many calculations a computer can perform each second.

Crucially, LineShine was built entirely with Chinese-designed processors, rather than the US-made

chips that power most of the world's top systems.

The United States still claims three of the top four spots, with El Capitan, housed at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California, coming in at second place.

Out of Europe, Germany's JUPITER Booster rounds out the top five. □

# U.S. Congress passes symbolic Iran war rebuke to Trump

## Washington, United States

The U.S. Senate passed a largely symbolic resolution Tuesday calling for an end to President Donald Trump's war with Iran, delivering a fresh rebuke to the White House as it tries to negotiate a lasting settlement with Tehran.

The House-passed measure, adopted by the Senate in a 50-48 vote, directs Trump to remove US forces from hostilities with Iran unless Congress explicitly authorizes military action.

Because the measure is a "concurrent resolution," it does not go to Trump's desk for signature and carries disputed legal force.

But its passage still puts both chambers of Congress on record against a conflict that began with US and Israeli strikes on Iran in late February, rattled global energy markets and opened a broader regional war involving Lebanon and Gulf states.

The vote came as the Trump administration pursued a 60-day diplomatic push to turn a preliminary memorandum of understanding with Iran into a final agreement covering Tehran's nuclear program, sanctions relief and the Strait of Hormuz.

Senate Democratic leader Chuck Schumer forced the vote to put Republicans on record after several Trump allies voiced alarm over both the war and the president's deal to end it.

"Republicans can complain about Trump's war, his secrecy, and his disastrous deal with Iran all they want behind closed doors, but the only way to ensure this war ends once and for all is for Republicans to act," Schumer said in a floor speech ahead of the vote.

The resolution earlier cleared the Republican-controlled House after four Republicans joined every Democrat in backing it, a rare break with Trump on matters of war and national security.

Democrats say Trump violated the Constitution by launching military operations against Iran without



U.S. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) speaks to reporters after the weekly Senate policy luncheons at the U.S. Capitol on June 23, 2026 in Washington, DC. Schumer spoke out against President Trump's Iran deal and a the need for the Senate to pass a War Powers Resolution regarding Iran.

congressional approval.

### - 'Dangerous prospect' -

Under the 1973 War Powers Act, presidents must obtain authorization from Congress within 60 days of introducing US forces into hostilities, though administrations of both parties have often contested how the law applies.

The White House has argued that resolutions seeking to curb Trump's powers to wage war in Iran are unconstitutional and says the conflict had already ended under an April ceasefire ordered by Trump.

It has also warned that restricting the president's authority could weaken Washington's leverage as negotiators seek to lock in a final deal with Iran.

Speaker Mike Johnson, a Trump ally, said before the House vote that limiting the commander-in-chief during negotiations was a "very dangerous prospect."

But Democrats and some Republicans say the fighting continued well beyond the legal deadline and that Trump has repeatedly threatened renewed strikes.

The vote also reflects growing unease in Congress over the cost of the war, which disrupted trade

routes, drove up energy prices and placed new strain on US voters already worried about inflation ahead of November's mid-term elections.

The administration's diplomacy with Tehran has moved quickly since Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian signed the preliminary agreement, which was meant to halt the wider regional conflict and reopen the Strait of Hormuz.

But major disputes remain. Iran said Tuesday that the UN nuclear watchdog would not be allowed to inspect nuclear sites bombed by the United States and Israel last year, rejecting Vice President JD Vance's claim that Tehran had agreed to allow inspectors back in. □

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# As bee population collapses, U.S. apiarists fear research cuts

## Baker, United States

In a lot behind a disused West Virginia gas station at the foot of the Appalachian Mountains, Roy Funkhouser is surrounded by about a dozen beekeepers and countless buzzing bees.

This club of apiarists -- ranging from hobbyists to full-time commercial bee farmers -- gathers regularly to learn new skills and discuss tricky problems, not least the parasitic varroa mites that plague their hives.

But the group -- and beekeepers across the country -- face a new challenge: The government's closure of a key research facility, home to the nation's oldest bee lab that has been at the vanguard of research into bee ills for over a century.

Funkhouser, a veteran commercial beekeeper, should have around 1,200 hives under his care. This year, he's sitting on less than 200.

"It's a real struggle," Funkhouser told AFP. "The parasites that we've got now, the mites and everything -- more viruses and more pesticide exposures, more chemical exposures -- everything is just more of a struggle today than what it was in the past."

### - Catastrophic losses -

He's hardly alone. America's beekeepers are in a bad way.

They lost more than half their bee colonies in the year leading up to April 2025, according to the latest estimates from Apiary Inspectors of America, marking the highest annual loss since the



Bee researcher Zac Lamas (L) gestures while speaking to a local beekeeping club in Baker, West Virginia, on May 9, 2026.

group began surveying beekeepers.

### - Mites & Viruses -

"You know, I can sample for a mite count, but I can't sample for mitochondrial DNA," Funkhouser said. "We need the lab for that."

Funkhouser is referring to the aptly named "Varroa Destructor," a 1.5mm crab-looking creature that the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) calls "the most serious pest of honey bees inflicting more damage and higher economic costs than all other apicultural diseases."

The mites now wreak havoc on American bee colonies by feeding on the insects and spreading a wing-deforming virus.

The mites are also a threat to American crops.

Farmers pay Funkhouser to truck his bees across the country -- as far as the almond fields of California -- where they spend around two weeks pollinating crops. "They'll get a percentage of almonds without [my bees] but not nearly the quantity that they're looking for," Funkhouser explained.

### - Farm science -

In his mite battle, Funkhouser has found an ally in Zac Lamas, a researcher at the bee lab within the USDA's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC). Lamas's "whole team come down one time, and we sampled everything," Funkhouser said. "They took bees back and grewed them in the lab, they cultured all the pollen, the wax, and many, many things."

Lamas and his colleagues

then formulate advice to share with beekeepers around the nation.

"It's not that we're working with one beekeeper. We might be working with several million dollars' worth of colonies, or several million dollars' worth of pollination services that won't exist because these colonies are at risk," Lamas told AFP between bare-armed lectures atop the hives.

But researchers like him may soon be out of job, as the USDA looks to save money by shutting BARC, eliminating labs and redistributing others to facilities across the country.

### - Congressional cuts -

A USDA spokesperson told AFP that Congress had reduced agriculture research funding by more than \$32 million "in certain areas,"

forcing the closure of the storied research center, leaving the fate of the nation's oldest bee lab uncertain.

Lamas argues this is short-sighted.

"The lab is 3.2 million (dollars) a year for 20 plus scientists, and all the work we do," he said. "We responded to a \$600 million problem... The idea that we're redundant and expensive isn't a good way to generalize the value of this lab or the cost of this lab."

The USDA did not respond directly to AFP's questions about the fate of the bee research or where it might be relocated.

### - Institutional knowledge -

Amid the uncertainty, Lamas has taken a job with a local university -- outside the lab. But he fears the loss of institutional knowledge when the lab is fragmented.

"You have a dozen service-driven, -minded people, who all they want to do is provide benefits in the form of food security to the American public," he said. "When we have a problem, multiple people with overlapping skills can work on it."

Beekeepers are worried too. "It's going to be a big loss," Funkhouser said. "We've got results from a lot of our testing and figured out a lot of the things that are going wrong."

"The unfortunate thing is, it seems like when you figure out one thing the next year, it's something else." □



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 re-

corded -- 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. □

# Congolese chefs put high-end spin on traditional cuisine

## Kinshasa, DR Congo

Yam gratin, safou-fruit butter and caterpillar sauce: in the Democratic Republic of Congo, a country not usually associated with haute cuisine, a new generation of chefs is putting a gourmet spin on traditional recipes.

Far from the conflicts that plague the vast African country's east and away from the poverty in the slums of Kinshasa, customers clink cocktail glasses in hushed lounges on the top floor of a building in the Congolese capital, with a view over the chaotic megacity of more than 17 million people.

On the menu: ravioli of kilebu, a mushroom- and peanut butter-based Congolese speciality, with ballotine of sole in butter made from safou, a local fruit.

The restaurant, Zaire the country's former name offers up "Afro-fusion" cuisine to local and international elites, using locally sourced products in high-end dishes inspired by traditional Congolese cooking.

"When people say 'DRC' abroad, it's always pejorative. It's all talk about war or how Congolese people love to dance," said the



Congolese chef Archi Dimosi fries food in a pan while preparing dishes inside his kitchen in Kinshasa on May 17, 2026.

restaurant's owner, Noushka Teixeira, against a background soundtrack of rumba, the country's famed musical style.

Teixeira, a passionate foodie, spent a decade and a half in the DRC's former colonial ruler, Belgium, then decided to return home to put Congolese culinary heritage in the spotlight. She and her husband opened the restaurant last year.

"We Africans have a ten-

dency to tell ourselves that everything foreign is better, but that's because we've never bothered to truly exalt our own products," said Teixeira, who has both Congolese and Brazilian roots. In the kitchen, chef Samuel Bobo was simmering mbotto, a local freshwater fish, with tomatoes and onions a dish "inspired by the one my grandmother used to make for me", he said.

Bobo studied economics at university, but his passion

for food prevailed.

He mastered the restaurant trade under Belgian chefs in Kinshasa before striking out to recreate the recipes he learnt growing up.

"There's not really any culinary school in the DRC. A lot of people learn on the job," said Teixeira, who trained most of her team herself.

### - Shortages -

Keeping fresh products in stock is a challenge.

Only a fraction of the sprawling country's arable land is farmed, while decrepit roads make transportation difficult.

The DRC imports most of its food supply.

"We buy our fruits and vegetables at the market, but we have to import our meat from Belgium to be sure of the quality," said Teixeira.

In the capital's outskirts, chef Archi Dimosi has also learnt to make do with shortages.

"You have to be creative to be able to adapt to the unexpected and change your menu at the last minute," said Dimosi, who specialises in blending Congolese flavours and European techniques.

He has developed his own network of suppliers to source fish from Lake Tanganyika or the Atlantic coast, beef from the western province of Kongo-Central and lamb from the eastern city of Goma.

In his kitchen, he was putting the finishing touches to a vol-au-vent pastry made of sweet potato dough and garnished with mushroom and "mbinzo" sauce a Congolese caterpillar. □

## 'Paris in this heat is awful': Tourists change plans as sites close early

### Paris, France

The severe heatwave sweeping France on Tuesday forced the early closures of top Paris tourist hotspots the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre, and left disappointed visitors sweltering with little respite.

Spanish nurse Maite Blazques said she had spent months saving up to bring her six-year-old son to Paris, but the record heat forced her to reorganise the whole holiday without going inside key landmarks.

"We had to change our whole trip," said the 35-year-old from Madrid, as France on Tuesday experienced its hottest day since measurements began in 1947.

"We won't be taking a

guided tour of the historic Marais district, or a river boat cruise, and we won't be going up to the top of the Eiffel Tower," she said quietly, head bowed and holding her son's hand.

The operator of the Eiffel Tower said the latticed-steel monument would "exceptionally close" early on Tuesday at 4 pm (1400 GMT), and it was "very likely" it would have shortened opening hours again on Wednesday.

The 324-metre (1,063-foot) tower, which attracts seven million tourists a year, usually stays open past midnight during the high season.

Below the landmark site, American tourist Tamara Dancer said her guided

tour was cancelled on Tuesday afternoon.

"It hurt our vacation," she said.

Elsewhere in the capital, tourists armed themselves with umbrellas, hat and fans to brave pavements radiating heat.

John Beeler, a 45-year-old American engineer, said he and his wife were disappointed.

"Visiting Paris in this heat is awful," he told AFP, wearing a fisherman's hat and holding a small fan.

"We're suffocating in the streets, we're suffocating in the subway and we're even suffocating in our rental," he said, adding they would be moving to an air-conditioned hotel room.

### - 'Put off your visit' -

Drake Winners, a 66-year-old retiree from London, was also glum.

"You discover Paris by walking, but in this heat, it's impossible," he said.

Instead, he said, he was visiting museums and

churches where he had a better chance of staying cool.

He was able to peruse collections at the Louvre, the world's most visited museum with around nine million visitors a year. □



This photograph shows the Eiffel Tower as it has announced its early closing due to heatwave in Paris on June 23, 2026.



Ukrainian founder of Tsvite Teren company Olga Ostapenko stores jewelry in Kyiv on June 10, 2026, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

## Guns, drones and doves: War reshapes Ukrainian jewelry scene

### Kyiv, Ukraine

In a Kyiv workshop, a jewelry maker was putting the finishing touches to her latest piece -- blow-torching a necklace pendant into the shape of a drone propeller. With works that resemble bullets, tanks and peace doves, resisting Russia's invasion is inspiring a new wave of designs reflecting a country, society and artistic scene transformed by the four-year conflict.

The shift is being driven by demand from both the military and civilians.

"It's part of a soldier's identity," said Illia, a 26-year-old craftsman with the Karpenko brand, holding the just-finished pendant resembling the blades of a reconnaissance drone.

The brand also makes pendants with stones from Snake Island the Black Sea outpost that became a symbol of Ukrainian resistance after a radio exchange of Kyiv's soldiers' expletive-laden rebuff to a Russian warship's demand to surrender went viral.

"They in a certain way identify a soldier. If you work with drones, it is visible that you work with drones. If you are in a tank..." he said.

Its founder, Oleksii, joined the army after Russia invaded in 2022 and the company markets itself as "from a soldier for soldiers".

"There are brigades entire large brigades that order corporate orders. They order pendants for the whole unit," said manager Svitlana Karpliuk.

Military-inspired pendants are the most popular product also used to "honor" fallen comrades, she added.

Many of the designs particularly small drone-themed pendants are popular among civilians, too.

### - Symbols of war -

At the Karpenko workshop, a woman was buffing and polishing a chunky silver bracelet in the shape of tank tracks.

Through four years of relentless Russian attacks, many Ukrainians have imbued parts of the war into their daily life adopting the symbols of conflict to show their defiance or remember those killed.

Music, culture, art and fashion have all been transformed. Jewelry maker Kateryna Tytova was forced to flee from the eastern city of Donetsk under Russian occupation since 2014.

When Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, her workshop in Gostomel, on the outskirts of the Ukrainian capital, was destroyed.

Now rebuilt, she designs and produces pieces

based on viral content and war memes a way, she says, to preserve the memory of war for future generations.

"Later some child will ask, 'Grandma, what is that pendant you have?'" she said, holding a small silver piece resembling a cotton bud a reference to a widespread language meme in Ukraine mocking Russia.

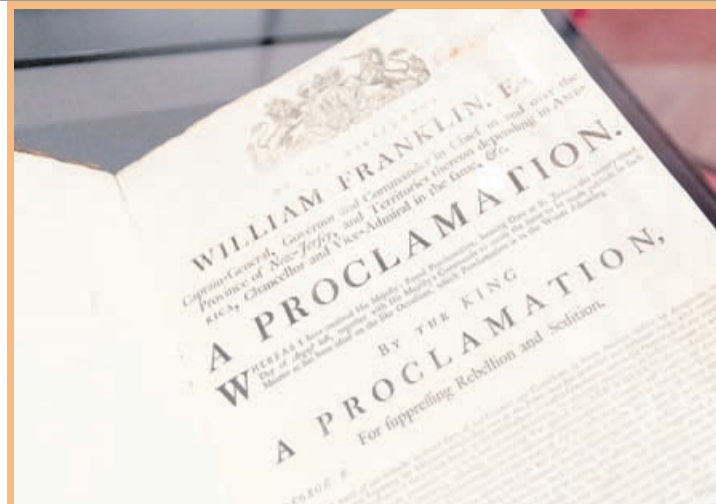
In her small, messy workshop an elevated brick and wooden house she placed some recent designs on a stone slab.

They include a depiction of the national "Motherland" statue holding up two middle fingers and a landmark tower from Mariupol the southern city captured by Russia in 2022 after a brutal weeks-long siege.

### - 'We live in fire' -

It is not just independent designers that are being inspired by the war -- luxury boutiques have also joined the trend.

At the Dukachi jewelry store, a cracked window patched with tape after a recent strike looks out onto Kyiv's Maidan Square, where processions for fallen soldiers regularly take place. Pendants in the shape of traditional motanka fabric dolls believed to offer protection are among the most popular. □



The Royal Proclamation suppressing rebellion (1775), King George III's formal declaration that the colonies were in rebellion, and his authorization of military action, is pictured at a photocall ahead of the exhibition: Revolution 250: America's Independence Story 1763-1783 at The National Archives in Kew, west London on June 22, 2026.

## 'Boston Tea Party' compensation claim to be displayed at U.K. exhibit

### London, United Kingdom

A compensation claim for 340 chests of tea thrown into Boston harbor in what is known as the "Boston Tea Party" is among the highlights of a U.K. exhibition exploring the birth of the United States.

The letter from the owner of the cargo, the East India Company, to the British government gives a breakdown of the tea destroyed on December 16, 1773 by American colonists.

It demands reimbursement to the tune of £9,659 -- the equivalent today of around £1.2 million (\$1.6 million) -- after what it calls "a lawless rabble went on board" and threw the tea into the water.

It's just one of the original documents including original maps, correspondence and first-hand accounts, to feature in the exhibition at the U.K.'s National Archives in southwest London which opens on Wednesday.

The exhibition comes as the U.S. gears up for the 250th anniversary of the nation's July 4, 1776, Declaration of Independence.

Other highlights include a handwritten letter from 1781 signed by George Washington, a founding father and the first U.S. president, accepting the British surrender in what became the decisive battle at the end of the American Revolutionary War.

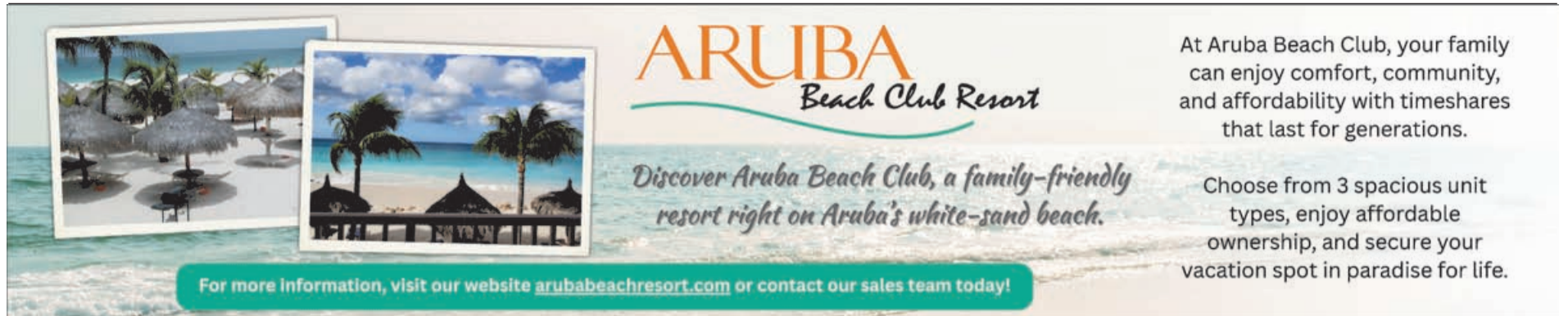
"This is the moment the British realized they would have to give up the Thirteen Colonies that would become the United States of America, the moment that Britain finally accepts the reality of the declaration of independence drafted five years earlier," said curator Sean Cunningham.

Also on display will be a rare first printing of the 1776 Declaration of Independence by Philadelphia publisher John Dunlap.

Adopted on July 4, 1776, the declaration states that 13 American colonies then at war with Britain would regard themselves as independent sovereign states no longer under British rule.

July 4 is celebrated as Independence Day in the United States.

Other exhibits include the Olive Branch Petition to King George III signed by many of the men who would become the nation's founding fathers in a last ditch attempt to avoid war a year earlier. □



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## 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 re-

search 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! ☐

## Fun facts about cacti hedges "Trankera"



(Oranjestad) – When off-roading in inland Aruba, you may notice some cacti hedges around various properties or lined up by certain pathways. These man-made hedges are called "trankera" and play an important role in maintaining our flora and fauna.

The trankera dates to colonialism, where settlers established several 'cunucu' (farm) on the island. People either used stone walls or trankera as a fence to ward off strangers and wild animals that can feed on the cunucu vegetation or cattle.

Nowadays, trankeras are less com-

mon, and those that still stand are often not maintained. On the surface this seems like a bad development, however this proved to be beneficial for our flora and fauna. Naturally developed flora around the hedges offers more shelter for fauna. Another aspect is the propagation process. When pruning hedges, flowers and seeds were removed, which limits propagation to a minimum.

So, though trankeras don't play that big of a role in Aruba's agriculture anymore, our environment still reaps the benefits of these long-standing natural structures. ☐

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By the dozen \$18

## El Niño brings extreme heat and drought; local health department advises community to prepare

(Oranjestad)—According to the latest international climatological information, there is a possibility that the natural phenomenon El Niño will continue to develop during the coming months of 2026–2027 in an extraordinary event that could bring dangerous and even devastating effects to certain regions. Although El Niño forms in the Pacific Ocean, its effects can be felt in different parts of the world, including the Caribbean.

Therefore, the Department of Public Health (DVG) is informing the community that Aruba may experience higher-than-normal temperatures, drier conditions, and an increased risk of heat-related health problems in the months ahead.

High temperatures can increase the risk of dehydra-



tion, heat exhaustion, fatigue caused by heat, and other health complications, especially for:

- Young children
- Elderly persons
- People with chronic health conditions

- Pregnant women
- People who work outdoors in the sun

DVG encourages the community in the coming months to:

- Drink water frequently

throughout the day, even if you do not feel thirsty.

- Avoid intense physical activity during the hottest hours of the day (11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.).
- Wear light-colored, light-weight clothing.
- Use SPF 30 or higher sun-

screen and reapply it throughout the day.

- Check on vulnerable family members and neighbors.
- Follow official information from DVG and the Aruba Meteorological Service for updates.

DVG will continue monitoring the possible effects of El Niño on public health and animal health in order to continue providing information, advice, guidance, and attention to the various at-risk groups in our community.

For more information, like the Directie Volksgezondheid DVG Aruba Facebook page, follow @directie\_volksgesondheid\_aruba on Instagram, follow the WhatsApp Channel, receive updates through the Aruba Health App, visit [www.dvg.aw](http://www.dvg.aw), call 522-4200, or email [servicio@dvg.aw](mailto:servicio@dvg.aw). □

## Blackstone Beach

(Oranjestad)—Named after its most recognizable feature, the Blackstone Beach almost represents the opposite of the typical Aruban beaches. For one, it has black sand and is covered in black smooth stones. Secondly, it lies on the northern side of the island, away from the white sandy beaches of in the southern region. So, if you feel up for something different or if it's opposite day, visit the Blackstone Beach.

Blackstone Beach shows the more natural side of Aruba; the stones that cover the beach and the shape of it has been craft-

ed for thousands of years through volcanic eruptions, coral reef movements and wave activity of the rural northern part of the island.

Located further east to the Natural Bridge and Andicuri Beach, the Blackstone Beach is relatively easy to access. Once you get passed the Ayo Rock Formation, take the Andicuri road leading up to Andicuri Beach. There, you can park your car and take a 1km hike towards Blackstone Beach.

Despite being called a beach, do note that it is



not advised to swim in the water, as the current is very strong and can easily stray you further in the

wild ocean. However, you can still enjoy a spectacular view of the stones and the northern ocean

that stretches out in front of the beach and take a picture with your friends or family! □

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**June 24th: A national celebration of Saint John's Day & Dera Gay**

(Oranjestad)—Every year on June 24th, the Aruban community come together and celebrates one of our most authentic traditions: Dera Gay\*. This is a national celebration for us, and families and friends usually spend the day visiting several places around the island to delight in traditional cuisine, music, games, ambience and the famous Dera Gay Dance.

**Brief history of Dera Gay**

Dera Gay is a celebration with various origins and histories. The cultural festival of San Juan (St. John the Baptist), known locally as Dera Gay, dates back to 1862 and is celebrated every year on June 24th.

The origin story of this religious and cultural festival has several versions. The religious origin is associated with the birth date of St. John the Baptist, while the cultural origin is tied to the harvest festival. Although it has a religious aspect, Dera Gay is predominantly recognized as a cultural festival featuring music, dance,

and singing. The dominant colors are red and yellow. Yellow symbolizes the flowering kibrahacha tree, while red represents the candle that is lit on the eve to announce the festival of the following day.

According to tradition, the festival begins on June 23rd when people light cornstalks as a symbolic cleansing to prepare for the new harvest season. On June 24th, after sunset, the celebration of San Juan starts in different districts with Dera Gay dance, candle dance, and flag dance. The candle dance is performed for protection against illness and bad luck. The most well-known dance is the Dera Gay, where a man, with his eyes covered and a stick in his hand, attempts to kill the "gay" (rooster). Previously, this dance took place in open fields with a live rooster.

Today, a dummy is used, and the dance takes place in clubs. Those who still perform the dance in the fields or on the ground use a calabash. There is also a flag



dance, where small flags are placed on the ground and a person with their eyes covered by a cloth searches for the flags. The ceremony is accompanied by folk music.

The prominent musical instruments are the fio, wiri, and tambu. The Dera Gay chant dates back to 1862. Of course, this celebration is not complete with-

out traditional local food and drinks. The festival of San Juan and Dera Gay regained popularity in the 1970s among the local population, and schools also started paying attention to this popular festival. "San Juan is coming, San Juan is going."

**Activity for the family!**

Don't miss the special Dera

Gay Parade, newly introduced for this year's celebrations. From 4 p.m. to 8 p.m., see the parading cultural trailer that will showcase various performances from local artists. The trailer will start at Bushiri Complex, making two stops at Community Center Dakota (Centro di Barrio Dakota) and Mabon Kavel, with a grand finale at Carnival Village in San Nicolas! □

**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! Packed with natural electrolytes, coconuts are a fantastic choice for hydrating yourself under the blazing Aruban sun. Coconuts also contain antioxidants that can help reduce stress and protect your cells. So while you're having fun exploring the island, know you are well-protected with a fresh-cut coconut in your hand. □





Article by Etnia Nativa  
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Episode CCCLVIII-358

# The Football Team Story That Shaped Aruban Identity

Each week, within this cultural space, Etnia Nativa—a leading voice in Aruban heritage—shares stories rooted in the island’s past, helping readers reconnect with the depth, identity, and living traditions of Aruba.

This new episode is dedicated to the iconic Aruban football club RCA, and honors the memory of one of its most distinguished players, Augusto Esteban Croes—a respected figure whose legacy continues to inspire as a cultural role model in the preservation and promotion of Aruban heritage through Etnia Nativa.

While the world celebrates the 2026 FIFA World Cup, it also offers a meaningful moment to reflect on the deeper history of football beyond the global spotlight—particularly the rich and often untold story of Aruban football: its pioneering teams, defining moments, and legendary players who have carried its spirit since the earliest days of the sport’s international rise.

The origins of the FIFA World Cup trace back to 1920, during the Olympic Games, when FIFA began exploring the idea of creating a global tournament. Several countries, including Uruguay, Italy, Hungary, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, were considered as potential hosts. Although European nations initially showed interest, many later withdrew, and Uruguay—supported by the United States—was ultimately selected.

This decision was also influenced by the post-World War I context, as FIFA sought to shift global attention away from a recovering Europe and toward South America. Uruguay, already an established sporting nation with Olympic success, emerged as a natural choice for this historic competition.

As international football gained momentum and



news of the tournament spread via radio, the sport’s popularity expanded across the world—including in Aruba, where it steadily took root and became part of the island’s growing sporting culture.

Against this global backdrop, Aruban football began to flourish. In 1933, early club structures emerged, eventually giving rise to organized competition and the formation of teams such as RCA, which would go on to become one of the island’s most successful



and influential football clubs.

RCA’s history is marked not only by sporting excellence but also by remarkable human stories. During a tour to Guatemala in the 1950s, the team experienced a life-threatening emergency when their aircraft suffered an engine fire mid-flight, forcing an emergency landing near Guatemala City. Although all players survived, the situation took an unexpected turn when they were mistakenly detained under suspicion related to a political assassination. Once the misunderstanding was cleared, they were released and continued their tour. Despite the ordeal, RCA demonstrated resilience on the field, completing the tour with strong performances and maintaining an impressive competitive record throughout the 1950 season.

Decades later, on February 15, 2024, RCA celebrated its 90th anniversary—marking nine decades of resilience, identity, and footballing legacy that continues to shape Aruban sport and culture today.

This week’s cultural column, Island Insight, is brought to you by Etnia Nativa—a gateway to the living spirit of Aruba’s ancestral heritage. Just minutes from the high-rise hotel district, this hidden cultural sanctuary invites visitors to experience the island’s history, traditions, and identity in an authentic and immersive way.

For travelers who value authenticity over spectacle, meaningful experiences over photo opportunities, and cultural connection over crowded attractions, Etnia Nativa offers something increasingly rare: a genuine encounter with the spirit of Aruba. Leave not only with memories and photographs, but with a deeper appreciation of the island, its people, and its enduring heritage.



Photo courtesy of Etnia Nativa Aruba

Don’t just visit Aruba—experience its spirit, uncover its stories, and connect with its ancestral roots. Reserve your mystical cultural experience WhatsApp: +297 592 2702 or Email: etnianativa03@gmail.com

## Sun catchers: The different lizards in Aruba

ORANJESTAD – Colorful or camouflaged, you're bound to encounter a variety of lizards basking in the sun or scurrying on their way in our island. From the charming, friendly iguanas to the good-luck gecko Pega-Pega, you're bound to meet a few of these special residents during your visit.

Aruba, as a desert island, is home to an incredible variety of unique and colorful species. Among them we can find different lizards, most of which have South American origins. But there are a few exceptions.

### Iguanas



Iguanas are easy to spot, as they are larger than most other lizards and when young, have a bright green color that makes them stand out.

The iguanas usually found in Aruba are the Iguana, known as the green iguana, or locally as Yuwana. The Yuwana are a mostly herbivorous species, and can grow up to 2 meters in size, including the tail, making them one of the largest in the iguana family. As you will see, despite their name, as they reach adulthood, the iguanas can take on a grey or blue tone instead of the bright green displayed by the young ones. In Aruba – as in the rest of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the most usual color varies from green to lavender, black and sometimes a reddish brown.

Yuwana is a protected species, as it is listed under Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), meaning that international trade is regulated through the CITES permit system. In the past, Arubans used to eat a popular Yuwana soup, as it was believed to give strength and help restore health – probably due to the protein boost it delivered. However, it is now illegal to catch, kill, buy or sell Yuwanas in Aruba, and this includes eating them!

### Turnip-tailed gecko

The turnip-tailed gecko is known locally as the Pega-Pega, meaning sticky-sticky, due to the way it sticks to walls using the suction in its little fingers. They are found inside houses, and are



mostly a nocturnal animal.

According to Etnia Nativa, the local Pega Pega is immediately recognizable by its large size, with a body length of up to 12 cm, and its large, swollen tail, approximately the same length or slightly shorter than its body; females are larger and more robust than males. It has short, robust legs with flattened toes and extensive basal webbing.

The undersides of its toes are covered in lamellae, which are used as friction pads to cling to smooth vertical surfaces. Some can even walk around completely upside down. Its toes are covered with ridges, which are peppered with millions of microscopic bristle-like structures called setae that attach and detach when the animal wills them to, and they never get gunked up.

They are variable in coloration, from a mottled dark gray to orange-brown, and are capable of changing color depending on their mood and surroundings. Mottled and banded markings aid in camouflage against tree bark. They are harmless and fragile; you can hold one in your hands as long as you are VERY gentle.

Never put pressure on its tail because it will surely drop as a measure to try to distract the predator, and they are different from other lizards because they're long-lived, talkative, lack eyelids, and their small scales are situated next to each other like cobblestones rather than overlapping as is the case in most other lizards.

Turnip-tailed Geckos are insectivorous and feed on cockroaches, grasshoppers, beetles, flies, mosquitoes, and spiders, which makes them the best pest control to have at home! They spend their days concealed in dark tree grooves and cavities, in narrow crevices in the walls, or behind paintings, which provide the perfect shelter for them. Pega pega is a gecko endemic to our island, but in time, some 4–5 intrusive gecko species have been observed, some of which do not cease to amaze us with the racket they make, especially during the hours of the night.

The Pega-pega *Phyllodactylus Julieni* is also a protected species in Aruba, by law. It is illegal to kill them!

### Blue Cododo

These are one of the most striking lizards in Aruba, recognizable by the male's bright blue color. The Aruban whiptail lizard, *Cnemidophorus arubensis*, is a species endemic to Aruba, meaning you can only find it here on our One Happy Island! They are also recognized as the most common and populous lizard on the island. While the male is blue with white dots, the female is brown with blue dots.



These charming lizards eat mostly plants, such as flowers, nectar, leaves and fruits, and occasionally enjoy some insects. They are selective in which plants they eat, because of the toxins present in many available plants species. The Cododo help take care of Aruba's vegetation by playing a significant role in the dispersal of seeds for certain plants: when they eat fruit, they excrete the seeds in diverse locations, contributing to the reproduction cycle of our local plants.

### Striped anole



The striped anole (*Anolis lineatus*) that lives in Aruba is known locally as Waltaka or Toteki. This is a species of lizard in the family Dactyloidae, and they are native to Aruba and Curaçao. It is usually found in dry areas, commonly where there are not large trees; rather they enjoy rocks, walls or tree trunks, as they prefer to stay close to the ground.

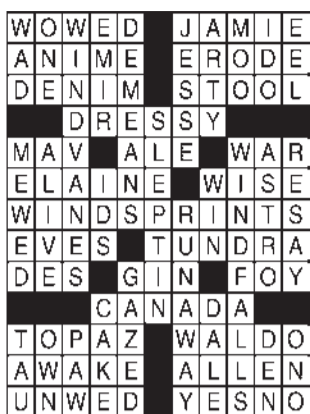
These lizards are about 7cm in length, have a brown color with a stripe on each side and typically, several stripes on the body and tail that are lighter in color. It has a dewlap which is orange-yellow – and what's unique about this species is that it is the only known species of anole where the dewlap is asymmetrically colored, with one side being a deeper orange and the other side a lighter yellow. Mostly this is seen in the males, as it is almost imperceptible in the females. If the Toteki shows you his dewlap, retreat! This is not a friendly greeting!

Lizards are wonderful creatures that are precious to our fragile, local ecosystem. Please be mindful of these residents as you enjoy your stay. □

Images: Some images are from Aruba Birdlife Conservation.

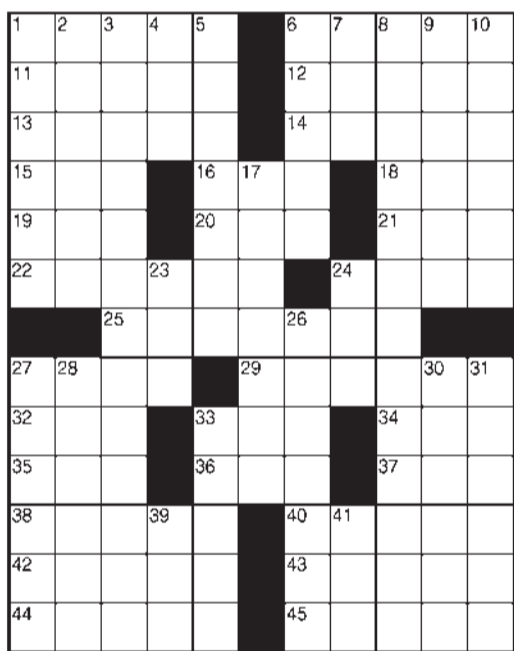
**CROSSWORD**

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**



- ACROSS**
- 38 Antlered animals
  - 1 Words to learn, for short
  - 6 Oxford parts
  - 11 Battery end
  - 12 Got up
  - 13 Seafood garnish
  - 14 Entice
  - 15 Bigwig, briefly
  - 16 Lynx or lion
  - 18 Deep hole
  - 19 Wing
  - 20 Shade
  - 21 Sheltered side
  - 22 Like many loaves
  - 24 Surrender
  - 25 Small amount
  - 27 Rowing team
  - 29 Spuds
  - 32 Brood watcher
  - 33 Heir, at times
  - 34 Catch some z's
  - 35 Colony member
  - 36 Works in a gallery
  - 37 Draw

- DOWN**
- 1 Cornet features
  - 2 "Ah, Wilderness!" author
  - 3 Flattering
  - 4 Bother
  - 5 Taken out of the game
  - 6 Barista's creation
  - 7 "Right you —!"
  - 8 Like orange and blue
  - 9 Spotted
  - 10 Sofa's kin
  - 17 Books reviewer
  - 23 Pasture grazer
  - 24 Director's cry
  - 26 Bach creation
  - 27 Deep ravines
  - 28 Airport car
  - 30 Job rewards
  - 31 Goes 80
  - 33 Fresh
  - 39 Hair goo
  - 41 Shirt protector



2-24

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.

**2-24 CRYPTOQUOTE**

HIUKSM LEZZ KCR HCJM EW  
LM LUER WCB DCJM CRIMB  
TMBDCK CB EW LM LUER  
WCB DCJM CRIMB REJM.

— XUBUHO CXUJU

**Cryptoquote:** IT IS AMAZING WHAT YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH IF YOU DO NOT CARE WHO GETS THE CREDIT. — HARRY S. TRUMAN

**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.

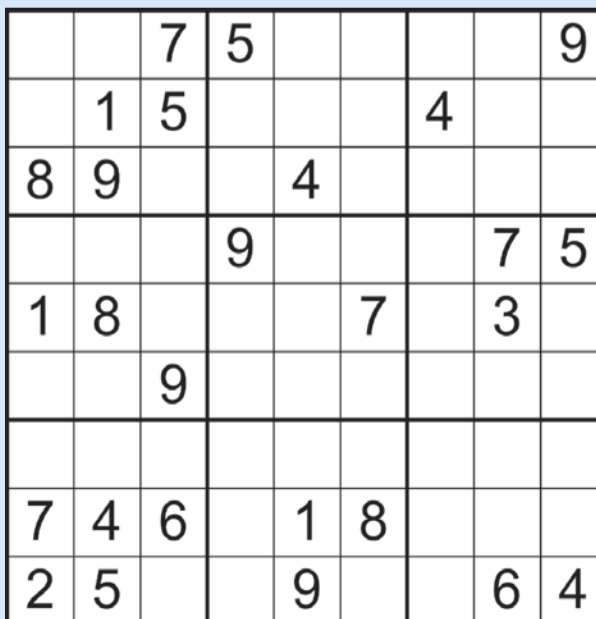
**JUNE CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE**

<b>02 TUE</b>	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: B
	<b>CARNIVAL MAGIC</b> Arrival: 9:00   Departure: 22:00   Berth: C
<b>09 TUE</b>	<b>CARNIVAL HORIZON</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 22:00   Berth: B
	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: C
	<b>CARNIVAL MARDI GRAS</b> Arrival: 13:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: I
<b>16 TUE</b>	<b>ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: B
	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: C
	<b>SEVEN SEAS MARINER</b> Arrival: 10:00   Departure: 21:00   Berth: I
<b>17 WED</b>	<b>CARNIVAL VISTA</b> Arrival: 7:00   Departure: 16:00   Berth: C
	<b>ALLURE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: I
<b>23 THU</b>	<b>CARNIVAL HORIZON</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 22:00   Berth: B
	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: C
<b>30 TUE</b>	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: B
	<b>CARNIVAL MAGIC</b> Arrival: 9:00   Departure: 22:00   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: ★★★

6/24

**Answer to previous puzzle**

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

Difficulty: ★★

6/23

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# What is driving Europe's heatwave?

## Paris, France

Europe is baking under a scorching heatwave, with health warnings in place across western and central parts of the continent as temperatures climb to record-breaking highs.

Among the factors driving these extremes are atmospheric and circulation patterns that keep hot air trapped in place for days, causing the mercury to slowly rise.

Scientists say these weather patterns are nothing new, but heatwaves are made more intense in a world hotter because of burning fossil fuels.

### - 'Omega block' -

A circulation pattern over Europe is creating "the equivalent of a traffic jam in the atmosphere which locks in heat", Samantha Burgess from the European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts, told AFP. A ridge of high pressure drawing hot air from North Africa is wedged between two areas of low pressure, one in central Europe and the other off the coast of Portugal.

This is known as an "omega block". The pattern gets its name because the jet stream a current in the atmosphere that moves air and weather systems from west to east bends into a shape resembling the Greek letter.

### - Vacuum cleaner -

The area of high pressure gets stuck "because of the pressure on either side", said Burgess, a climate scientist and strategic lead for climate at ECMWF.

"The jet stream gets stuck in a loop and it forces other weather systems to go around it," she said.

With little energy available to disrupt it, the omega pattern can persist for days or weeks allowing heat to stew and temperatures to intensify beneath it.

"So hence blocking it means that once this meteorological set-up gets going, it can just keep reinforcing itself for some time," said Will Lang, chief meteorologist at the UK's Met Office.



This picture shows the dried out Oberer Stinkersee (Upper Stinking Lake), highly saline, shallow soda lake located within the Neusiedl See-Seewinkel National Park near the village of Podersdorf am See, south-east of Vienna, Austria, on June 23, 2026.

Sebastien Leas, a forecaster at France's weather service, likened it to a "vacuum cleaner, drawing in heat and masses of hot air rising from North Africa" and blasting it northward in a violent torrent.

### - Heat dome -

If this pattern is very stable, the high pressure system can evolve into a "heat dome". This acts like an atmospheric lid on a boiling pot, trapping heat beneath. Air sinking beneath the pressure warms as it is compressed, while heat near the surface cannot escape. These conditions suppress cloud formation and favour still weather with little wind. Clearer skies allow more sunshine to cook Earth's surface, creating a heat feedback loop. "Under the right conditions and you do need the right conditions it just

gets hotter and hotter," said Lang.

### - Hotter world -

Heat domes and omega patterns are nothing new and can form separately from each other, experts said. A heatwave in late May across Europe was tied to a heat dome, while a horseshoe-shaped omega pattern was identified as a key driver of a major hot spell over France in June 2025. They are also not unique to Europe but occur in both hemispheres across the world's middle latitudes. "They can occur over the Pacific, over Europe, over North America," said Burgess. Scientists say there has been an increase in high pressure systems in Europe in recent decades but whether this is a consequence of climate change remains a subject of debate. □

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220389

## HEALTH



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### OTHER

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<b>Urgent Care</b>	<b>586 0448</b>
<b>Walk-In Doctor's Clinic</b>	<b>588 0539</b>

### EMERGENCY

<b>Police</b>	<b>100</b>
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<b>Police Noord</b>	<b>527 3200</b>
<b>Police Sta. Cruz</b>	<b>527 2900</b>
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<b>Fire Dept.</b>	<b>115</b>
<b>Red Cross</b>	<b>582 2219</b>

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

# Hollywood powerhouses bring AI fight to Europe

## Brussels, Belgium

Cate Blanchett brought Hollywood star power to Brussels on Tuesday as she launched a free tool to give people the right to decide how their image can be used by AI firms.

Blanchett announced the Human Consent Registry was live at the European Parliament also attended by Hollywood directing heavyweight Steven Soderbergh.

The public tool available online will allow anyone to register how they want their identity name, image, voice, likeness, movement and/or other personal attributes to be used by artificial intelligence systems.

They will have three options: allowed, allowed with terms, or prohibited.

"Human consent is not an impediment to progress. Human consent does not diminish the struggles and the joys of technological innovation or inhuman creativity," Blanchett said at the event in the parliament's library.



Australian actress and producer Cate Blanchett looks as she attends the launch of the "RSL Media Human Consent Registry to Protect Identity in the Age of AI", at the EU Parliament in Brussels on June 23, 2026.

She insisted the issue did not just affect public figures like herself, but for anyone who has been photographed "or simply lived some part of their life online".

The registry has been launched by RSL Media, co-founded by Blanchett, a non-profit organisation focused on ensuring consent in AI use.

RSL Media hopes AI companies will voluntarily con-

sult the registry. Blanchett has been a staunch proponent of protecting rights in the age of generative artificial intelligence.

She was among over 800 creatives including fellow actor Scarlett Johansson as well as director Guillermo Del Toro, who published an open letter accusing AI giants of "theft" in January this year.

Hosting Tuesday's event was EU lawmaker Eva

Maydell who hailed the new tool.

The registry "represents an ambitious attempt to turn the principles into practice and make consent more accessible and feasible, to make rights more transparent, and to make trust more scalable", Maydell said.

Soderbergh hailed "a template that we think really works for both the companies and the creative community".

## - Storytelling -

The European Parliament has garnered international attention after the EU became the first in the world to regulate AI so comprehensively.

Maydell had been one of the key EU negotiators of the landmark AI Act.

Top parliament official Sabine Verheyen said the EU needed "robust concept mechanisms so creators retain control over their own image, voice" and more.

Blanchett and Soderbergh weren't the only Hollywood figures in town to talk AI.

Acclaimed American filmmaker Darren Aronofsky told an audience of creatives at the EU parliament in another event hosted by MEP Maydell how his AI studio Primordial Soup was using the technology for storytelling.

Aronofsky felt that, while the models often created "incredible" images, they lacked the "power of emotion and the power of our humanity".

With that discovery, he said he realized "we need to figure out how to use this incredible technology" and "turn them into storytelling machines".



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## India startup head Kunal Shah appointed as new WhatsApp boss

### Mumbai, India

Meta has tapped Indian fintech founder Kunal Shah to be the new head of WhatsApp, as the US tech giant seeks ways to monetize the messaging app's massive user base.

The announcement, made Monday night, was accompanied by news that Meta would also lead a \$900 million funding round in Shah's consumer finance firm CRED.

"Kunal built CRED into one of India's most important technology companies," Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg said in a statement.

"He brings the kind of builder mentality and global perspective that will serve him well in running the world's biggest messaging app." Outgoing WhatsApp head Will Cathcart said he was leaving the app "in the strongest position it's ever been", citing the company's decision to scale end-to-end encrypted messaging to "more than three billion people" as a key achievement.

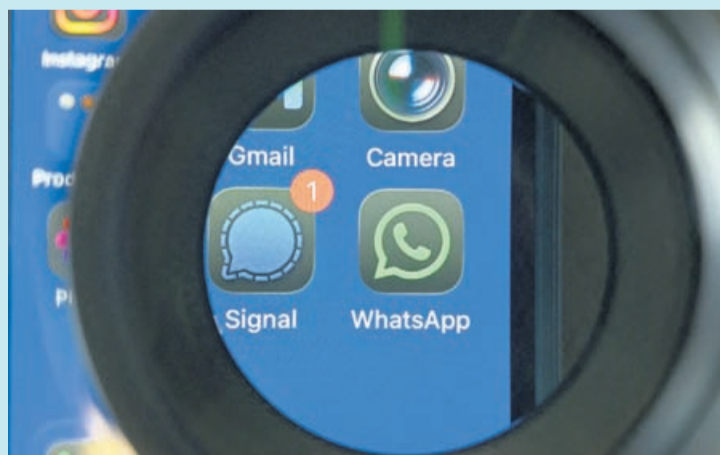
Shah, a serial entrepreneur and influential figure in India's fintech world, started CRED in 2018 after selling an earlier payments start-

up to Indian e-commerce giant Snapdeal for roughly \$400 million.

He is also one of India's most prolific angel investors, according to data tracker Tracxn, with the local financial press often reporting how Shah agrees to seed funding pitches within minutes of hearing them.

But over the past few years, Shah has focused on building CRED which got its start by offering rewards to customers for timely credit card payments.

Since then, the company has aggressively expanded into offering wealth management, insurance and lending services to its 17 million users.



This photograph shows the logo of U.S. instant messaging software WhatsApp displayed on a smartphone's screen in Brussels on June 9, 2026.



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Portugal's forward #07 Cristiano Ronaldo shoots and scores his team's third goal during the 2026 World Cup Group K football match between Portugal and Uzbekistan at the Houston Stadium in Houston on June 23, 2026.

## Ronaldo scores at sixth World Cup as Portugal run riot

### Houston, United States

Cristiano Ronaldo became the first player to score in six World Cup campaigns and silenced his critics as the Portugal captain struck twice in a 5-0 annihilation of Uzbekistan on Tuesday.

The big win in Houston put Portugal on the brink of the knockout rounds and was a resounding response to the 41-year-old's doubters. Ronaldo's goal after six minutes made history trumping even Lionel Messi by scoring at six World Cups stretching back to 2006.

The former Manchester United, Real Madrid and Juventus ace pulled out his trademark "Siu" celebration and let out a throaty roar in front of 68,777 fans. After Nuno Mendes made it 2-0, Ronaldo neatly got his second with a cool finish six minutes before the break.

That took him to 10 World Cup goals, more than any other Portuguese player including the great Eusebio.

Ronaldo came into the group encounter against

tournament debutants Uzbekistan with 143 goals, the most in international men's football.

But once widely regarded as a competitor to Messi for the unofficial title of best player, his powers have been on the wane at the highest level.

He had limited service in the disappointing 1-1 draw with the Democratic Republic of Congo to start Portugal's World Cup title bid.

But when he did have two chances he missed the target, igniting calls for coach Roberto Martinez to drop him.

His travails in front of goal were in glaring contrast to the likes of Messi, Kylian Mbappe, Erling Haaland and Harry Kane, who all made lightning starts to the World Cup.

But Martinez has stuck defiantly by his skipper, who was given a rapturous reception when he came out to warm up at Houston Stadium, and again each time he appeared on the big screens.

### - Ronaldo's day -

Ronaldo nearly pounced after just three minutes, narrowly failing to make contact at the far post after a cross by Mendes. Ronaldo slapped the turf in frustration.

He did not have to wait long for his goal, swivelling on the six-yard box to meet a cross first time from Joao Cancelo and smash the ball beyond goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov. The outclassed Uzbeks,

coached by the Italian 2006 World Cup winner Fabio Cannavaro, were perfect opponents for Ronaldo to rediscover his scoring boots.

It was 2-0 on 17 minutes when Mendes curled in a free-kick.

The Uzbeks thought they had pulled one back, after a screamer by Azizjon Ganiev, but the goal was ruled out after a VAR intervention for a foul on Cancelo.

It was Ronaldo's day, and he rolled in a third with only the goalkeeper to beat with a smart, controlled finish.

He might have had a third following an intricate free-kick routine, but Nematov denied him, clattering into the veteran attacker in the process.

From the resulting corner it was 4-0, with Ronaldo in the thick of it again before the ball went in off Nematov for an own goal. □

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# Diaspora World Cup champions diversity over division

## Atlanta, United States

When Sweden's Yasin Ayari scored seven minutes into his World Cup debut he raised his arms in apology rather than celebration out of respect for Tunisia, where his father is from. The case of the Brighton midfielder is far from unique at a World Cup awash with players who could play for multiple nations via birth or ancestral roots.

"It was a special game for me, that's why I didn't celebrate in the first goal because I feel a lot for the country (of Tunisia), I love this country," said Swedish-born Ayari, who could also have represented his mother's nation Morocco. Scouting and recruiting dual-national players has become vital to achiev-



Curacao's Dutch head coach Dick Advocaat gives instructions to Curacao's midfielder #07 Juninho Bacuna and Curacao's midfielder #10 Leandro Bacuna during the 2026 World Cup Group E football match between Ecuador and Curacao at the Kansas City Stadium in Kansas City on June 20, 2026.

Curacao's Leandro and Juninho Bacuna are one of seven sets of brothers taking part at the World Cup, four of which are representing different nations.

Paris Saint-Germain's Desire Doue forms part of France's star-studded attack, while his older brother Guela Doue is part of the Ivory Coast squad. Centre-back siblings John and Harry Souttar play for Scotland and Australia respectively. Nico Williams chose to represent Spain, while older brother Inaki plays for Ghana, alongside Derrick Luckassen, the half-brother of Dutch forward Brian Brobbey.

Cape Verde have been the revelation of the tournament, holding former winners Spain and Uruguay to draws in their first two World Cup matches. At the heart of the Blue Sharks defence has been Roberto 'Pico' Lopes. Born in Dublin to an Irish mother and Cape Verdean father, Lopes was recruited via networking site LinkedIn, but only at the second attempt. Lopes had ignored the first message sent by then coach Rui Aguas nine months earlier as it was sent in Portuguese, a language the Shamrock Rovers centre-back did not speak.

Nestory Irankunda, who scored Australia's opening goal in a 2-0 win over Turkey, was born in a refugee camp in Tanzania to Burundian parents, who had fled civil war before moving to Perth when the winger was still a baby. Those stories that champion the power of immigration are particularly poignant in a World Cup that began against a backdrop of exclusion.

Somali referee Omar Artan was denied entry to the United States, while four of the participating nations Haiti, Iran, Ivory Coast and Senegal are subject to US travel bans and visa restrictions. □

ing success on the global stage. Nearly a quarter of the 1,248 players selected for the 2026 World Cup represent a country other than their birthplace. Morocco became the first African nation to reach a World Cup semi-final four years ago and harbour hopes of at least matching that feat in the coming weeks. During an impressive performance to hold Brazil 1-1 in their tournament opener, they became the first side in World Cup history to at one point field a full foreign-born 11.

- **'Good combination'** - Curacao's fairytale appearance on the global stage owes much to the ties between the Caribbean island of 160,000 people and the Netherlands. Of the Blue Wave's 26-man squad, 25 are Dutch-born and they are led by former Netherlands boss Dick Advocaat.

"We have the heart of our homeland. And we've gone through the Dutch youth academy. That's a good combination," forward Jurgen Locadia said after Curacao stunned Ecuador to secure their first World Cup point with a 0-0 draw.

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