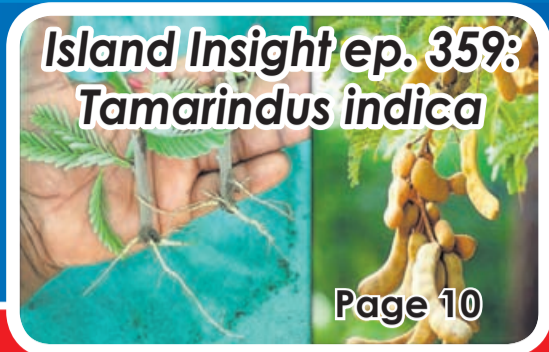


Island Insight ep. 359:
Tamarindus indica
Page 10



Aruba's ONLY English Vacation Newspaper

The Lionfish: An invasive specie for the marine wildlife



Page 8



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US President Donald Trump speaks with reporters after signing a presidential memo on pollution control in vehicles at the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, DC, on June 29, 2026.

North America trade pact talks to blow past renewal deadline

Washington, United States

The United States, Mexico and Canada are widely expected to continue talks on extending a North American free trade pact -- blowing past a Wednesday deadline for its renewal.

The deal, known as the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), remains in force for 10 years even if it is not renewed by July 1. But it will be subject to annual reviews thereafter, unless one party withdraws entirely.

The USMCA was implemented in 2020, replacing NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement that went into force in 1994.

U.S. President Donald Trump said in June that he was not "looking to renew" the pact, which he signed and praised during his first term.

Canada and Mexico have called for a 16-year renewal of the USMCA, but Trump has called it "irrelevant."

On Wednesday, officials from the three countries

are expected to meet and confirm if they wish to extend the agreement.

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney said he anticipated that meeting would be "a constructive exchange."

"I'm not expecting any drama tomorrow," Carney said, joking that he did not foresee a last-minute breakthrough and deal-signing.

"I'm not looking for my pen," the prime minister told reporters, with a grin on his face.

Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said Tuesday that she is waiting for the United States to confirm its position.

The United States and Mexico countries are scheduled to hold a third round of negotiations on the week of July 20 in a signal that parties continue seeking changes.

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer did not announce a schedule for formal talks with Canada, but has also met with his Cana-

dian counterpart Dominic LeBlanc.

- 'Slim chance' of withdrawal -

The July 1 deadline may be "symbolically important," but blowing past it does not bring practical impact for now, said Greta Peisch, a partner at law firm Wiley Rein.

Peisch, a former general counsel at the USTR's office, told AFP the Trump administration has signaled that it wants to see two areas of changes.

"One is on adopting rules and changes in the agreement that drive more manufacturing, not just to North America, but to the United States," she said.

The other is to address longstanding "irritants" such as Canada's dairy market restrictions.

Washington is devoting "time and effort into renegotiating the agreement," she said. "So I do see that they want to keep it in one form or another." □



CIA Director John L. Ratcliffe arrives to a closed Senate Appropriations Committee hearing at the U.S. Capitol on June 2, 2026 in Washington, DC.

CIA boss compares cutting-edge AI to nuclear weapons

Washington, United States

CIA Director John Ratcliffe on Tuesday compared the capabilities of the most advanced artificial intelligence models to nuclear weapons in a tacit defense of the Trump administration's recent hard line on controlling the release of the most powerful AI technology.

"In conversations with many of the president's other national security and economic security advisors, we're talking about the impact of these frontier AI models," Ratcliffe said during a speech at the AWS summit in Washington.

"It would be...not misplaced to refer to their capabilities as akin to digital nuclear weapons," Ratcliffe said. On June 12, Washington forced Anthropic, a leading American AI firm based in San Francisco, to cut off access to its two most powerful models, Mythos 5 and Fable 5, by imposing an export control on them.

The forced withdrawal of a frontier model by a government a first was only partially lifted on Friday for Mythos, now accessible to a restricted circle of U.S. partners, while Fable 5, its restricted consumer version, remains offline.

OpenAI, Anthropic's American rival, launched its GPT-5.6 model the same day with very limited access, agreeing for the first time to let the U.S. government vet authorized partners on a client-by-client basis.

Critics have called the government orders, which came with very little explanation, a de facto licensing scheme.

Toeing the government line, Ratcliffe reiterated that tracking emerging technologies has been his highest priority, "right up there with China," since he took office eighteen months ago. The analogy between cutting-edge AI and nuclear weapons has become increasingly common in recent months in U.S. national security circles, where several think tanks describe a genuine technological "arms race" pitting the United States against China and Russia. □

U.S. Supreme Court upholds transgender sports bans

Washington, United States

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday upheld state laws barring transgender athletes from competing in girls' and women's school sports, delivering a major victory to conservatives in one of the country's most fiercely contested culture-war battles.

The decision allows Idaho, West Virginia and more than two dozen other Republican-led states to enforce measures requiring students to compete in public school and college teams according to their sex assigned at birth rather than their gender identity. The ruling is the latest sign of the conservative-dominated court's willingness to side with states on the issue, following last year's decision upholding Tennessee's ban on gender-affirming care for minors. President Donald Trump applauded the decision as a "big win," posting on his Truth Social platform that the court had taken "that ridiculous situation off the table."

The cases before the court were brought by transgender students who argued that the bans violated the



Young women demonstrate outside the US Supreme Court as the court upheld state laws barring transgender athletes from competing in girls' and women's school sports in Washington, DC, on June 30, 2026.

U.S. Constitution's equal protection guarantee and Title IX, the federal civil rights law barring sex discrimination in education.

- Fair competition? -

Supporters of the laws say they are needed to preserve fair competition and protect athletic opportunities for girls and women.

Opponents say they single out a tiny number of vulnerable students for exclusion and discrimination, turning children's participation in school sports into a national political battleground.

Writing for the majority, Justice Brett Kavanaugh rejected arguments that restrictions on biological males in sports for women and girls unconstitutionally discriminate on the basis of sex or gender identity.

"May schools determine eligibility for women's and girls' sports based on biological sex? The answer is yes," Kavanaugh wrote.

"Consistent with Title IX and the Equal Protection Clause, we hold that the States may maintain women's and girls' sports for biological females. □

France to illuminate Statue of Liberty for U.S. 250th birthday

New York, United States

France will stage an elaborate light show at the Statue of Liberty to mark the 250th anniversary of the United States, the French consulate said Monday.

Described as a "monumental artistic creation," the show will be recorded in advance and broadcast by the ABC network at the start of its 25 hours of programming for Independence Day, July 4.

"The Statue of Liberty will be revealed to the public as it has never been seen before, in a staging designed to magnify its symbolic and emotional power," the consulate said.

"Our friendship goes back 250 years, it is still very strong, it runs deep, and that is why we wanted to do something significant," France's consul to New York Cedrik Fouriscot told AFP.

The Statue of Liberty in New York Harbor was given to the United States by France in 1886, and is one of the country's most famous monuments.

France also dispatched its air force acrobatics team to the United States this month to mark the 250th anniversary.

On June 9, eight Alpha jets of the Patrouille de France filled the skies above Manhattan with the colors of the French tricolor -- soaring above the iconic statue. □



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U.S. Supreme Court rejects Trump bid to limit birthright citizenship

Washington, United States

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday rejected President Donald Trump's bid to restrict birthright citizenship in a blow to one of his signature anti-immigration initiatives.

The court, in an eagerly awaited decision on the final day of its term, ruled 6-3 to maintain the right to American citizenship for nearly everyone born on US soil.

Trump signed an executive order last year on the first day of his second stint in the White House decreeing that children born to parents in the United States illegally or on temporary visas would not automatically become U.S. citizens.

Lower courts blocked the move by the Republican president, ruling that under the Citizenship Clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution nearly everyone born on U.S. soil is an American citizen.

The Supreme Court agreed in a majority opinion penned by Chief Justice John Roberts that was joined by two other conservative justices and the



Demonstrators rally in support of birthright citizenship outside the US Supreme Court as President Donald Trump attends oral arguments in Washington, DC on April 1, 2026.

three liberals on the top court.

"Children born in the United States to parents unlawfully or temporarily present are 'subject to the jurisdiction' of the United States and are citizens at birth under the Fourteenth Amendment's Citizenship Clause," Roberts wrote.

In an unprecedented move for a sitting U.S. presi-

dent, Trump personally attended oral arguments on birthright citizenship at the Supreme Court in April.

Trump stayed for the presentation by his solicitor general, John Sauer, but did not remain for the arguments of American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) attorney Cecillia Wang, who defended birthright citizenship.

Wang welcomed Tuesday's ruling, saying the court's decision "reaffirms a fundamental American promise if you are born here, you are a citizen."

"A president cannot change the Constitution by executive fiat," she said. Trump called the decision upholding birthright citizenship "bad for our country." He urged the Republican-controlled Congress in a

Truth Social post to "start TODAY to work on ending expensive and unfair to our Country, Birthright Citizenship."

"They will have my Complete and Total Support!" he said.

- 'Birth tourism' -

Trump's bid to end birthright citizenship was part of his wider campaign to limit immigration, which includes expelling millions of undocumented migrants and removing deportation protections from nationals of more than a dozen countries.

During oral arguments before the Supreme Court, Sauer argued that unrestricted birthright citizenship encourages illegal immigration and "birth tourism," in which foreigners come to the United States solely to give birth.

The 14th Amendment states that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States." It does not apply to those not subject to US jurisdiction the children of foreign diplomats, for example. □

Tens of millions swelter as heat wave blasts U.S.

Washington, United States

Tens of millions of Americans sweltered under furnace-like temperatures Tuesday as central and eastern cities hunkered down for a heat wave set to last through the July 4 holiday weekend.

Dozens of local temperature records could be broken, the National Weather Service (NWS) warned, with temperatures in many places to surpass 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) and high humidity pushing the heat index as high as 115 degrees.

It comes as America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary of independence, and as the United States along with Canada and Mexico co-host the World Cup soccer tournament amid the extreme

heat. Chicago, the nation's third-largest city, announced it was opening cooling centers and sending city employees to carry out wellness checks on vulnerable populations.

In New York, Mayor Zohran Mamdani's office said it

was launching an "unprecedented, historic" plan to deal with the heat that includes vans to provide residents with hydration, as well as "pop-up" cooling stations with misting fans and cooling towels.

Washington, the capital, meanwhile was forecast

to see 100F temperatures from Thursday through Saturday, when it will host a fireworks display on the National Mall that organizers said would be the biggest in history.

More than 60 million people are currently under heat alerts, the NWS said.

Health agencies are urging citizens to watch for signs of heat-related illness, ranging from cramps and exhaustion to life-threatening heat stroke.

Child hot-car deaths are another concern, with nine such deaths reported so far this year in the United States, against an average of 37 annually, according to the National Safety Council.

Pets are also at risk, with authorities recommending dogs remain indoors ex-

cept for bathroom breaks, and warning owners to watch for hot asphalt that can burn paws.

In World Cup news, numerous knockout-stage matches will be played under oppressive heat, including France v Sweden at New York New Jersey Stadium and Norway v Cote d'Ivoire in Dallas on Tuesday. The weather has already had an impact: France was forced to sit through a two-hour storm delay during its group-phase match against Iraq. Two group-stage matches were played in temperatures exceeding the threshold at which the global players' union recommends games be postponed or delayed, while dozens of fans have been treated for heat illness in Houston and Miami. □



Ny and her three-year-old daughter Justice play at a splash park on July 16, 2024 in Washington, DC.

From rubble to music: Gaza's Oud repairman

Palestinian Territories

In a modest makeshift workshop tucked inside the crowded Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza, the soft sound of an oud echoes through the ruins of war.

Surrounded by wooden pallets, fragments of crates that held humanitarian aid, and the pieces of damaged instruments, Palestinian craftsman Suhail Abu Shawish bends carefully over a battered oud, tuning its strings after days of painstaking repair.

The treasured instrument scarred by shelling and destruction during the war in Gaza is one of many that have found their way to his workshop.

"Young people have started sending their instruments to me for repair," Abu Shawish told AFP, as a customer walked into his workshop carrying damaged instruments wrapped in black plastic bags.

Several restored instruments, bright and shining, hang on the workshop walls -- symbols of resilience, music and craftsmanship in the shadow of war.

For the 60-year-old Abu Shawish, repairing ouds is far more than a profession.



Graphic content / Displaced Palestinian craftsman Suhail Abu Shawish glues a "Ud" or "Oud" musical instrument he is repairing, damaged by shelling or destruction during the war in the Gaza Strip using wooden pallets and leftover aid materials, at his makeshift workshop in the Nuseirat camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip on June 23, 2026.

His repairs are a mission to preserve a cherished part of Palestinian cultural identity at a time when so much else has been lost.

A father of five, Abu Shawish learnt to play the oud in the 1980s. He later worked with several institutions, where he became an expert in the conservation and restoration of musical instruments.

With no proper workshop, scarce materials and frequent power shortages, the craftsman relies almost entirely on hand tools.

During the war, he was displaced to the southern city of Rafah before eventually returning to his home in Nuseirat camp.

Working in his workshop, he cuts wood manually with a saw, smooths surfaces with a file, and painstakingly

glues together shattered pieces that many would deem beyond repair.

"Despite the shortage of wood and its high prices, they turn to me," Abu Shawish said.

"Despite the hardship of war, we continue to work," said the white haired musician, dressed in a blue shirt and jeans.

For him, every restored instrument is a small victory

against the devastation surrounding him.

"I love buying ouds, and I am also an oud player," Abu Shawish said.

- 'Made in Gaza' -

Customers arrive hoping he can restore the warm, distinctive sound that has echoed through Arab culture for centuries.

Yet the challenges facing the craftsman are immense.

Wood traditionally used in oud-making has become nearly impossible to obtain. Import restrictions and shortages have forced Abu Shawish to become resourceful.

He now scavenges wood from discarded food aid crates, transforming waste scraps into replacement parts.

Pieces salvaged from severely damaged ouds are carefully reused to repair others.

"There is no wood available," Abu Shwaish explained.

"We buy scrap wood from aid boxes and use damaged instruments to repair other instruments."

The soaring cost of materials has compounded the struggle. □

Taiwan's ageing seaweed harvesters hope younger women wade in

Magang, Taiwan

Unfazed by the crashing waves, 72-year-old Wu Feng-chiao yanks fistfuls of brownish-purple seaweed she will process into jelly, one of the last women in Taiwan keeping the marine harvest tradition alive.

Seaweed foraging on the rocky coastline at the edge of the Pacific Ocean can be arduous and dangerous, says Wu, whose passion has kept her going for more than half a century. But as younger Taiwanese largely opt for city life over the island's remote northeast, she fears this tradition could vanish when her generation of "hainu", or "sea women", are no longer able to carry on.

"If it's in your blood, you'll naturally want to learn, right?" she told AFP in her village of Magang.

"Even if you just come here, gather something from the sea and eat it, that's already part of being a hainu."

Along the easternmost point of the coast, sea women stuff "stone flowers" as the algae is called in Taiwanese and Mandarin into net sacks.

They then lug heavy loads back home, spreading the seaweed out on the ground and snipping off residue. Absorbing sunlight, the seaweed takes about four days to fully dry before it can be washed several times and boiled to release the jelly-like substance known as agar-agar.

Once dried, 300 grams (0.7 pounds) of Gelidium algae can produce about 50 bottles of refreshing agar-agar cooler, each selling for around \$1.30.

Bobbing around the shore in goggles and a wetsuit, an energetic Wu shares from her decades of experience practising the tradition she had learned from her father as a teenager.

"The seaweed grows around big rocks when there are big waves, you have to move aside quickly," she said. "If a wave hits you, you can get hurt."

The tiny woman can confidently haul a single sack weighing 40-50 jin (around 20-25 kilograms, or 44-55 pounds) over uneven and slippery rocks.

"It's tough work... the hardest part is carrying the seaweed back. It's very heavy and your shoulders ache afterwards."

- 'I just can't resist' -

Hainu, a vestige of the Japanese colonial era, shares

some similarities with the centuries-old matriarchal tradition of haenyeo freediving in South Korea, although Taiwan's sea women do not go underwater. Now there are no more than four women in Magang village who still regu-

larly collect "stone flowers", Wu says, all in their 70s or older.

"How many more years can we keep doing this? We really hope some young people will come back and carry it on," she said. □



Wu Feng-chiao, 72, harvests gelidium algae, locally known as "stone flowers", from rocks along Taiwan's northeastern coast in Magang fishing village in New Taipei City on June 16, 2026.

Secret cameras, mics and AI reveal rare Cambodia wildlife

Cardamom National Park, Cambodia

Above the patter of rain cascading through the jungle canopy comes the haunting call of a pileated gibbon singing to fend off intruders in Cambodia's Cardamom Mountains.

It is being recorded as part of work harnessing hidden microphones, cameras and artificial intelligence to reveal the secrets of species living deep in the rainforest and help protect them.

To conservationist Ratha Sor, the whoops and whistles are the sound of hope a sign that the country's largest remaining stretch of intact rainforest is healthy enough to support the endangered species.

Gibbons are "indicators that our forest is still alive", he said.

By showing that everything from pangolins to elephants call the Cardamom Mountains home, conservationists hope to secure its future, in a country that has lost over a third of its forest cover in the last 25 years.

"This is the real evidence... we are conserving very unique species in our landscape," said Ratha Sor, biodiversity and science manager at Conservation International (CI), a US-headquartered non-profit. The Cardamoms range, spread across more than



This photo taken on June 9, 2026 shows Chea Sareach (C), Biodiversity and Science Senior Coordinator of Conservation International Cambodia, ranger Hou Sophoan (R) and local community member Pan Sok (L) reviewing photos from a camera trap in the Cardamom mountain area in Koh Kong province.

a million hectares (2.47 million acres) in southwest Cambodia, is regarded as one of the most important remaining rainforests in the region.

For decades, it was eaten away by rampant deforestation and emptied by poaching.

Bolstered protections have helped slow both, though infrastructure projects, including dams, remain a serious threat.

In 2024, CI published the results of the first-ever systematic camera trap survey of the Central Cardamom region, revealing more than

100 resident species, nearly two dozen of them either vulnerable or endangered. That effort, involving nearly 150 devices placed at regular intervals, will be repeated later this year.

It is supplemented by ongoing targeted camera trapping, focused on areas where animals are likely to be and offering deeper understanding of how populations are changing and behaving.

- Macaques, dholes, elephants -

AFP joined conservationists, rangers and locals this

month as they retrieved and replaced cameras and microphones in the forest.

Under a chaotic canopy woven with vines and studded with fearsome spiked stems, the group crossed streams, waded through mud and picked off dozens of leeches.

Local community members like Pan Sok, a member of the Chong Indigenous minority, guide CI on where to place devices.

The 50-year-old lives outside the forest but calls himself a "jungle man" after

years tapping resin from its trees.

He sat to review black-and-white footage from a camera he helped locate, describing "pride" at the sight of pig-tailed macaques, endangered wild dogs called dholes and his favorite, elephants.

"My efforts paid off," said Pan Sok.

Some of these species are seen fairly regularly elsewhere in Southeast Asia, but encounters can be vanishingly rare in the Cardamoms.

A ranger told AFP he had not seen an elephant once in 12 years patrolling. While camera traps can capture many of the forest's inhabitants, gibbons are rarely seen because they live in treetops and move too quickly, so CI is turning to bioacoustic monitors and AI.

Its staff spent three months training a machine-learning program to identify calls recorded by dozens of monitors placed at 10 sites.

They are set at least three kilometers (1.9 miles) apart, as close as gibbon groups come to each other without fighting, meaning each device is picking up a different troop.

- 'This is gibbon, this is not' - In just six weeks, the monitors recorded nearly 800 calls.

The team labeled up to half the data for the AI, teaching it "this is gibbon, this is not", said Ratha Sor.

AI then processed the rest, and in the future will be trained to distinguish male from female, and eventually individual calls.

Experts say poaching in the region has waned, though a ranger found part of an old snare during AFP's visit. Patrolling has also reduced small-scale encroachments, but infrastructure projects including multiple dams are still driving deforestation.

In the last five years, the Central Cardamom protected region has lost nearly 7,000 hectares of tree cover, Global Forest Watch data shows. □

Restoration work begins on main Damascus Jewish cemetery

Damascus, Syria

An organisation has begun restoring Damascus's main Jewish cemetery,

the group's founder told AFP on Tuesday, as members of Syria's dwindling community seek to revive

their heritage after ex-ruler Bashar al-Assad's ouster.

At the cemetery located along the airport road near the capital, an AFP correspondent saw rows of stone graves bearing inscriptions in Hebrew, as workers inspected the site. Syrian-American Joe Jajati, founder of the Syrian Mosaic Foundation that is overseeing the restoration, said the cemetery contains hundreds of tombs.

The businessman, whose grandfather was a Syrian rabbi, said work had begun to clean up the cemetery and shore up some

dilapidated graves, while "restoration work on the outer walls and the installation of lighting and surveillance cameras" would be completed next month. "The cemetery wasn't damaged during the war," he said, referring to Syria's civil war that began in 2011, adding that "the last burial was around a year and a half ago".

Jajati, who lives in the United States and has come to Damascus repeatedly in recent months, said visits to the cemetery had largely halted for several decades. □



This picture shows a view of the Jewish cemetery in Damascus on June 30, 2026.

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Fun facts about the Terns



(Oranjestad)—Throughout the months of January to September, big groups of terns migrate to the island for breeding season. These terns are important seabirds, and their presence on Aruba is a unique phenomenon. Here are some fun facts about terns.

Why terns matter

Terns (Sternchi in Papiamentu) migrate annually to Aruba for breeding season. Our island, hosts 10 different species of terns which is crucial for global seabird conservation. 90% of Caribbean population of Common Tern nest on Aruba, 25% of Global population of Cayenne Tern nest on Aruba and 25% of Caribbean population of Black Noddy nest on Aruba, making their conservation especially important.

Breeding season

The terns breed mainly along the north coast of Aruba as well as the San Nicolas Reef Islands (No-Go conservation zones). Baby Beach is a particularly special site for terns, since this is where they carry out their reproduction rituals. Referred to as a “discotheque” by Natasha Silva, the point of Baby Beach near the open water is where a large group of terns spends the season searching for their partner—for life—to reproduce.

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns, all of which breed at different times. The ten species of terns that migrate to the island include the Cayenne Tern; Cabot’s Tern; Common Tern; Roseate Tern; Least Tern; Brown Noddy; Black Noddy; Sooty Tern; Bridled Tern and the Royal Tern

Main threats to these seabirds are human proximity, kite-surfing, unleashed dogs, ATVs/UTVs, Jet Ski’s and pollution.

How to protect them

Aruba Conservation Foundation advises everyone to keep their distance from these seabirds, do not visit the reefs, do not fly drones around nesting areas, keep your dogs on leashes, do not drive on the coastline and do not leave trash thrown about. “Nature has no boundaries and its protection is a shared responsibility.” □

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(Oranjestad)—If you were planning on taking a trip downtown but want to check how much a taxi ride costs, do we have great news for you. Now you can plan your trip ahead on taxi.aw. With just a few clicks, you’ll know exactly how much it costs to take you to your destination.

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 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. The system provides a range of different locations and zones to select. Be mindful that there are also conditions that apply to the rate of your trip, all of which are explicitly explained on the website’s home page.

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Conchi: Aruba's hidden natural pool

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

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura



di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reachable with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a

long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to

enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

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

However, when you eventually do get there, you will be greeted with crystal

blue water surrounded by a natural rock formation that protects you from the wild waves on the other side. Though the pool is located on the northern side of the island (where the sea is largely rough and largely no suitable for swimming), the pool itself is very calm. It's also relatively deep, and you can climb up the rocks and jump in!

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

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life

(Oranjestad)—Despite its colorful and striking appearance, the lionfish has become a Caribbean-wide problem for Atlantic sea life. The Aruban marine wild life is also affected by this beautiful dilemma, as it is foreign to our waters and has become a danger to our local fish and reefs.

Originating from the Indo-Pacific Ocean, the lionfish is a relatively small fish. It has no teeth, but it does protect itself against predators using its sharp, colorful spikes. It is said that the

sting of a lionfish can be up to 100 times more painful than that of a bee's sting.

Its natural predators in the Indo-Pacific are sharks and barracudas, but in the Caribbean Sea, local fish do not recognize the lionfish as part of their diet. In other words, the lionfish has no predators in the Caribbean Sea. And this becomes a major problem for our local marine life; if there are no predators to stimulate population control of lionfish, these fish can continue to reproduce and expand



to other parts of the Atlantic, become more invasive and dangerous for other types of fish.

For Aruba, the lionfish is a problem especially for our local coral reefs. According to Patrick van Brakel, lionfish expert and hunter from the Hunting Lionfish Aruba foundation, every reef has a "cleaning station"—tiny fish that eat algae and other types of waste on a reef, thus maintaining the reef's health and providing food to the fish population in the area. However, as the lionfish feeds off of these tiny fish, it becomes harder for the coral reef to maintain its health.

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep, they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day. Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

They are caught with a hand spear, an object resembling a garbage picker with 4 sharp prongs. These spears are used like a sling shot to catch lionfish from a distance. These fish are then put into a collecting tube and taken out of the water. This way, he does his part in protecting the local wild life. □



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Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

(Oranjestad)—If you ever plan on taking a group tour of the island, you may pass through the Frenchman's Pass in Balashi. The Frenchman's pass (known to locals as "Franse Pas") remains a mysterious—and spooky—road of which its legend is told from generation to generation.



The history of the Frenchman's pass—and how it got its name—dates back to the colonization era, when the French tried to colonize the island, but were met with an angry mob of indigenous settlers, refusing to give up their land. However, as the French were heavily equipped with fire arms, the indigenous settlers began to retreat, and hid away in nearby caves. The French colonizers tried to smoke them out of the caves, but the indigenous settlers ended up inhaling too much smoke and most died in those caves.

From then on, this passage was known as Frenchman's Pass, and there have been many accounts of spirits roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

There are many ghost stories surrounding this area, but one of the most famous one involves a lonely hitchhiker, trying to find a ride back home in the dark rainy night.

Sometime after trying to hitch a ride home, the man saw a car approaching, appearing almost ghost-like in the rain. However, since he needed a ride real bad, he didn't think twice and jumped in. But to his horror, he noticed that there was no driver in the front. Paralyzed with fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to

move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the window and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out

and he ran to Santa Cruz.

Arriving at a nearby bar, he ordered a drink and began to tell everyone about his experience. Everyone grew quiet, because they realized he wasn't some drunk messing around; he was telling the truth.

Sometime later, two men walked into the bar and one of them noticed the hitchhiker. He called out to his buddy and said: "Look, there's the idiot who sat in our car when we were pushing it!"

French man's pass is one of the few sites on the island that keeps the locals on their toes. While most ghost stories may not have real grounds—or some may even be a set up story for a joke, this pass holds a lot of value to our culture of folkloric story-telling. □

Source: visitaruba.com

Fun facts about the "transhi" hedges!

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

These hedges are called "transhi," and have a historical and cultural meaning on the island. Used by cunukeros* around the island back when agriculture played a more dominant role in day-to-day life and survival, these stone hedges represent the resilience of our great-grand parents, who had to make do with what nature gave them.

These stone structures are tradition-

ally placed carefully on top of each other. No cement or other binding mixture was used to hold the structure together. Though not commonly used for modern homes, the few structures that remain around the island stood the test of time, some completely intact even after decades of rain, wind and urbanization. These stone hedges are a representation of the Aruba's unique farming culture—which valued durability, sustainability and resilience.

*cunukero: Aruban farmers.

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



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Article by Etnia Nativa

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Episode CCCLIX-359

Tamarindus indica

Each week, within this cultural space, Etnia Nativa Aruba—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.

In this new episode, Etnia Nativa explores the remarkable story of the tamarind tree—a humble tree with extraordinary benefits that deserves a place in every conversation about health, culture, and sustainability. Discover why this tree remains one of Aruba's timeless treasures, valued for its enduring contributions to the island's health, heritage, and cultural identity.

Across Aruba, the tamarind tree stands quietly in gardens, parks, and along roadsides. Many of us know it for its delicious sweet-and-sour fruit, enjoyed in juices, candies, sauces, and traditional recipes. Yet few realize that this remarkable tree, *Tamarindus indica*, is far more than a culinary delight—it is a natural pharmacy, a piece of our history, and a symbol of resilience. Although the tamarind tree traces its origins to Madagascar in Africa, it has flourished throughout tropical regions including India, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Its remarkable adaptability has allowed it to become an important part of many cultures. In Aruba, the tree arrived centuries ago when Dutch sailors transported tamarind seeds during long maritime voyages as a natural remedy against scurvy, thanks to the fruit's rich vitamin C content. Today, tamarind remains one of nature's most versatile gifts.

Its bean-shaped pods contain a rich pulp packed with fiber, antioxidants, vitamins, and beneficial plant compounds. Modern scientific research continues to support many of the traditional medicinal uses that generations have relied upon.

Nutrition experts recognize tamarind as a valuable addition to a balanced diet. Rich in dietary fiber and naturally low in fat, it promotes healthy digestion while helping people feel fuller for longer. Natural compounds such as flavonoids and polyphenols may contribute to weight management, while hydroxycitric acid has been studied for its potential role in reducing appetite.



For centuries, tamarind has also been used to support digestive health. The fruit has traditionally served as a gentle natural laxative to relieve constipation, while preparations made from its leaves have been used to ease diarrhea. Different parts of the tree—including the bark, roots, and leaves—have long been valued in traditional medicine to help soothe stomach discomfort and prepare herbal teas for colds and flu.

Perhaps even more impressive are tamarind's potential benefits for chronic health conditions. Emerging research suggests that compounds found in tamarind seeds may help regulate blood sugar levels and reduce inflammation, offering promising support for individuals living with diabetes. While further clinical studies continue, these findings reinforce the value of this fruit.

The heart also benefits from tamarind's nutritional profile. Its naturally high potassium content supports healthy blood pressure, while antioxidants may help reduce harmful LDL ("bad") cholesterol and promote healthier HDL ("good") cholesterol. Together, these effects contribute to improved cardiovascular health and may reduce the risk of heart disease. The liver, another vital organ, may also receive protection. Studies have suggested that tamarind extracts may help reduce fatty liver changes associated with high-calorie diets by combating oxidative stress and inflammation.

As allergy season approaches, tamarind once again demonstrates its versatility. Thanks to its antioxidant and antihistamine-like properties, combined with its abundant vitamin C, it

may help strengthen the immune system while supporting the body's natural defenses against allergies, coughs, asthma symptoms, and seasonal colds. Yet perhaps the greatest value of the tamarind tree extends beyond medicine.

It reminds us that many of nature's greatest treasures have been growing quietly around us for generations. In an era increasingly focused on processed foods and synthetic remedies, the tamarind tree invites us to reconnect with traditional knowledge while embracing scientific discoveries that continue to reveal its extraordinary potential.

As Aruba looks toward a healthier and more sustainable future, protecting and appreciating trees like the tamarind is more important than ever. They nourish our bodies, preserve our heritage, and connect us with the wisdom of generations past.

The next time you pass a tamarind tree, remember—you are not simply looking at another tree. You are standing before one of nature's most remarkable gifts, rooted deeply in Aruba's landscape, history, and future.

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.

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 Email: etniana03@gmail.com

Cas Floria: The Decorated Houses of Aruba



(Oranjestad)—There may be as many as 200 to 300 houses in Aruba that have beautiful decorations, including curtains, stars, flowers, half-moons, etc., placed on the corners or the upper parts of the house.

These houses can be found everywhere, in nearly every district of Aruba. People always thought that these designs came from an Indigenous culture; possibly, the star design resembled the way it was shown, similar to the "God Sun" of the Indigenous people. However, the history of this decorative system does not go very far back in time.

In his book *Millefiori di Aruba*, Father Nooyen declares that the first house to receive this type of decoration was the home of Mr. Bernardo Eman Croes in Pos Chikito. Julien (Janchi) Christiaans and Gregorio (Goy) Semeleer built this house in 1920 and created the decorations on the upper corners of the house. Other people in Pos Chiki-

to, who saw this beautiful work, also wanted their houses decorated in the same way.

Leoncio (Joonchi) Henricus of Pos Chikito learned the work from Janchi Christiaans and, together with his son Bonifacio (Bonny) Henricus, continued decorating houses in Pos Chikito and Sabana Basora.

Janchi Christiaans, Goy Semeleer, and others from Noord, such as Hilario Christiaans, Victor Tromp, Gerardo Jacobs, and Cornelis Rosa, brought the same decoration to houses in Noord and Paradera. In 1927, Janchi Christiaans built a house for Julian Tromp in Buguruy.

This was the first house in Noord to receive this type of decoration. Later, those in Paradera, Santa Cruz, and Savaneta copied the house decorations. They practiced these systems up until 1944.

Even today, the patterns are well preserved and

protected, but they are no longer used.

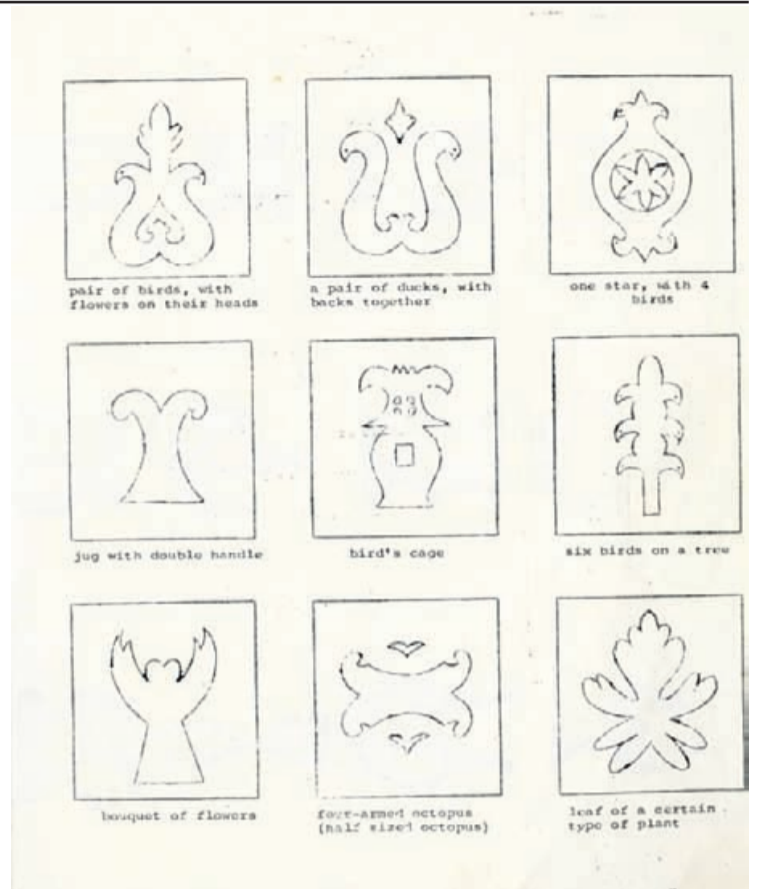
Janchi Christiaans began cutting the patterns out of zinc plates and cardboard. He also had his own creations and systems, while Leoncio and Bonifacio Henricus produced their own fantasies. This is what made these decorations popular: many people could turn their imagination into expressive art.

However, the decoration of houses was not originally Janchi Christiaans's idea. Janchi was a disciple of his father, Hose Christiaans, and of the Donati family, from Italian ancestors. They also made these decorations, though without using any patterns, simply designing and applying them with common plaster as the material.

Using Dr. Johan Hartog's Aruba, *Breve Historia* as reference, I noticed that he also writes that these designs are not indigenous symbols, but only decorative fantasies. One point of disagreement is that he wrote that in 1820 someone from Curaçao began this type of decoration in Aruba.

This means that, according to Father Nooyen, who declared that it began in 1920, it would have actually started 100 years earlier. As part of his research, Ito Tromp also interviewed Mr. Julio Maduro of the Department of Labor at that time, who told him that around 1880 Johannes (Janchi) Wolff began with house decorations. And as Janchi himself said, he learned this from his grandfather, who in earlier times had built the first lighthouse at California Point.

After comparing his information, Ito Tromp wrote that Hartog was right concerning the period when decorated houses began in Aruba in 1820. However, it was not people from Curaçao who started it. Victor Tromp, who was 87 years old at the time of writing, was a member of Janchi



Wolff's family.

Julio Maduro said that in 1920 they began again with this type of decoration. In general, there is no specific year (up to now) when Arubans first began with this decorative artistic expression. It is interesting to know that these decorations are a kind of symbol for several generations.

For example: Decorations that appear on the house of the Arends family could also be seen on the houses of the Bermudez or Croes families. This was because parents always gave a specific sign to their sons or daughters when they were getting married.

It was also said that these designs had a certain kind of voodoo purpose, to keep away the spirits of the Indigenous people who were buried in the neighborhoods where the houses now stand. However, this

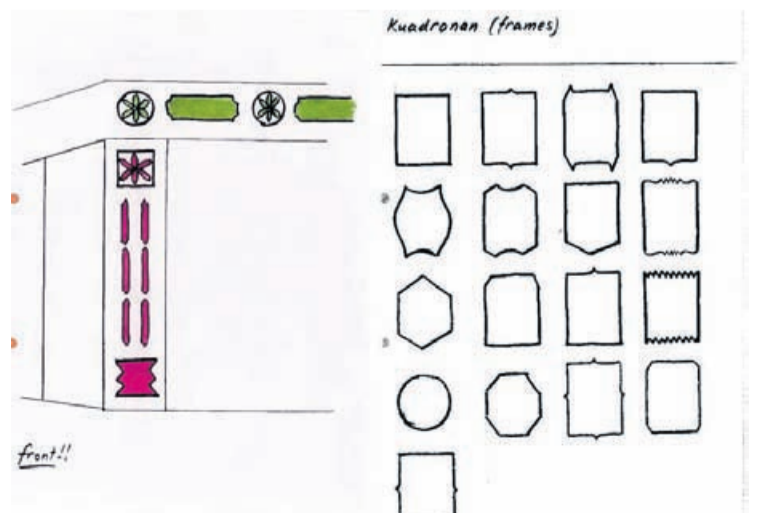
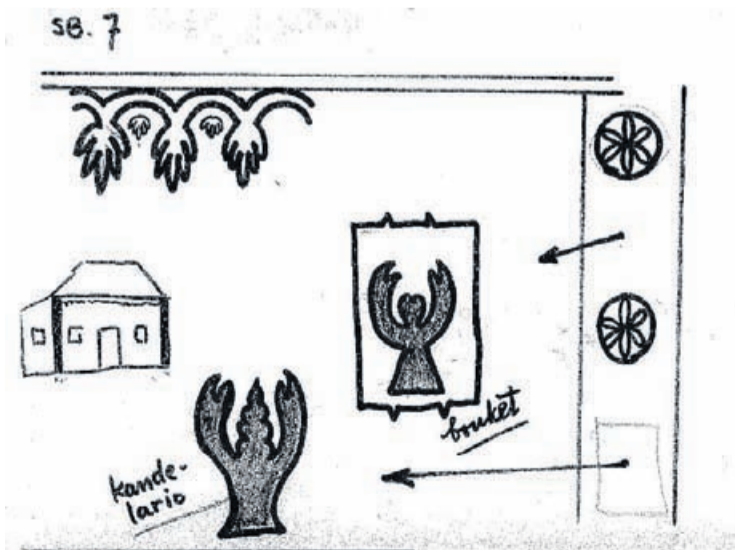
has almost completely disappeared.

As for the continuation of these designs from family to family, this is a cultural heritage that is no longer established. For this reason, in earlier times, every young man who married had to have his own house; otherwise, there would be no marriage.

The designs were created according to the individual's imagination. If he saw, for example, six pairs of birds on a tree, he would then paint six pairs of birds on a tree. If he wanted to express his love for his twin children, then he designed a twin.

Nowadays, if you want to use these designs for your house, don't worry—you can simply copy them and paint them. □

Source: *E casnan Decora na Aruba (1976)* by Ito Tromp.



CROSSWORD

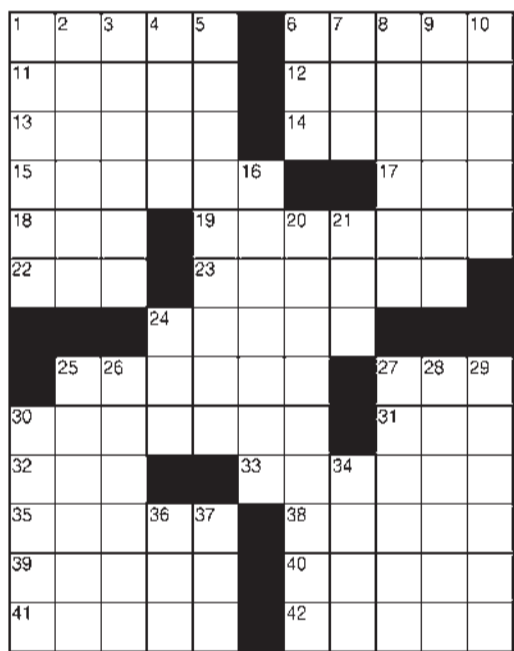
By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS** 40 Mink's
 1 Penalized cousin
 6 Linen type 41 Pricey
 11 Yucca's kin 42 Approaches
 12 Cost as much as
 13 Ark 1 Element measure
 14 Man of morals 2 Scaly pet
 15 Laptop's kin 3 Caught
 17 Luau strings 4 Malevolent
 18 Count starter 5 Sensor's job
 19 Treated tenderly 6 S&L offering
 22 "Far out, dude!" 7 Regret
 23 Rover's rewards 8 Disparaging remark
 24 Holiness 9 Feeds the furnace
 25 On the beach 10 Had aspirations
 27 Reggae's kin 27 Layers
 30 Audit
 31 Cartoonist Key
 32 Important time
 33 Was rude, in a way
 35 Makes do
 38 Plain silly
 39 Garth Brooks's birthplace



DOWN

- 1 Element
 2 Scaly pet
 3 Caught
 4 Malevolent
 5 Sensor's job
 6 S&L offering
 7 Regret
 8 Disparaging remark
 9 Feeds the furnace
 10 Had aspirations
 16 Bullfight stars
 20 School punishment
 21 Week part
 24 Greek consonant
 25 Ventilate
 26 Paper fastener
 27 Layers
 28 More acute
 29 Venomous vipers
 30 Splinter groups
 34 Poker price
 36 Language suffix
 37 Easy mark



3-4

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.

3-4 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

LZZ MEFKXQRW ALNQ WQDKQC

HQWCJXLCJEXW ES UAJDA CAQ

CKLNQZQK JW FXLULKQ.

— PLKCJX TFTQK

Cryptoquote: LIFE IS THE FLOWER FOR WHICH LOVE IS THE HONEY. — VICTOR HUGO

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.

JULY CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

07 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
08 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: Berth: E
12 SUN	FREEWINDS Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
14 TUE	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 11:30 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CARNIVAL VISTA Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
15 WED	ALLURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 7:00 Departure: 16:00 Berth: I FREEWINDS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: Berth: E
19 SUN	FREEWINDS Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
21 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★

6/30

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7/1

NASA robot mission aiming to rescue space telescope

Washington, United States

NASA is set to launch a daring robotic rescue mission, a long shot bid to prevent one of its aging telescopes from vanishing into dust. If successful, the effort could pave the way for giving other satellites a second life.

The operation is set to last several months, kicking off with the launch of a robot designed to rescue the Swift space telescope that's currently falling towards Earth.

Without intervention, Swift is expected to soon burn up in the atmosphere.

The rescue spacecraft developed by the US startup Katalyst was slated to lift off Tuesday at 1023 GMT from a Pacific Ocean atoll aboard a small rocket named Pegasus.

But NASA postponed the launch, citing unfavorable weather conditions, and set the next launch attempt for "no earlier than Wednesday, July 1" at 0943 GMT.

The rocket-propelled launch vehicle will not take off from a launch pad. Instead, it will be released from a jet.

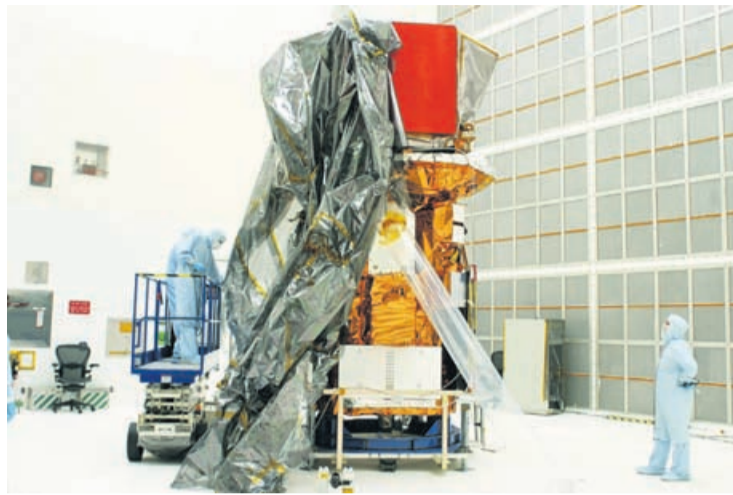
"Everything about this mission is so crazy," said NASA astrophysicist Regina Caputo with a laugh during an interview with AFP.

After it reaches an orbit near that of the telescope, the robot must locate Swift across the vastness of space.

The aim is then for the robot to maneuver around the telescope and latch on with three movable arms. It will then vie to tow Swift into a stable orbit over the course of at least a month, rescuing it from destruction by moving it about 300 kilometers higher.

"This is a lot of firsts stacked on top of each other," said Shawn Domagal-Goldman, the director of NASA's astrophysics division, during a recent call with reporters.

"I'm just deeply thankful that we're even giving this a go."



This handout photo released by NASA on July 31, 2004, shows the Swift spacecraft being unwrapped in Hangar AE at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station at Kennedy Space Center, Florida.

- 'Special' telescope -

The idea of such a rescue might seem odd at first glance. The Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory telescope was launched in 2004, and was originally designed for a two-year mission.

The device was intended to study gamma-ray bursts, what Caputo called "the most energetic things that happen in the universe."

She likened it to a supercharged version of a supernova, which is a dramatic, explosive death of a star.

Gamma-ray bursts are extremely brief, she explained, so the telescope was placed at an altitude of approximately 600 kilometers in low Earth orbit, so it could remain in constant communication with researchers.

But with that pro came a con at such an altitude, the device without its own propulsion would eventually drift closer to Earth and burn up in the atmosphere.

Caputo said that phenomenon was expected and normal, because when the Sun is in its more active cyclical stages, it emits more particles and causes an expansion of Earth's atmosphere.

That creates drag, meaning satellites in low Earth orbit lose altitude.

Yet when forecasts in early 2025 indicated the telescope was nearing the end of its life, NASA began considering a possible rescue. "We decided, yeah, we want to go save this one this time, because of how special it is," said Domagal-Goldman. □

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San Nicolas:
Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

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Blood Bank Aruba	587 0002
Urgent Care	586 0448
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EMERGENCY

Police	100
Police Oranjestad	527 3140
Police Noord	527 3200
Police Sta. Cruz	527 2900
Police San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulance	911
Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

TAXI SERVICES

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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AID FOUNDATIONS

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Alcoholics Anonymous
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Narcotics Anonymous
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Centre for Diabetes
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Child Abuse Prevention
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Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

For sale on Facebook: monkeys, rhino horn and dead pangolins

Bangkok, Thailand

The ghostly white creature curled up on a weighing scale is almost unrecognisable in the Facebook post offering it for sale. Only closer inspection reveals it to be a dead pangolin.

The animal, one of the world's most endangered and trafficked mammals, has been stripped of its scales and is being advertised by a Thai account selling "seasonal wild delicacies".

The post is one of dozens reviewed by AFP that illustrate what conservationists call rampant illegal wildlife trafficking across social media platforms, particularly those belonging to Facebook parent company Meta.

A report by several NGOs released Monday accuses Meta of hosting the world's "largest single known illegal wildlife trade market" and effectively encouraging the trade by sharing advertising revenues with users and allowing them subscription models.



This photo illustration taken in Bangkok on June 25, 2026, shows a person using a laptop to view a Facebook post offering a dead pangolin curled up on a weighing scale for sale.

The report follows recent research by the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), which warned Facebook is now "the central public infrastructure through which online wildlife trafficking is being concentrated, discovered and scaled".

Meta declined to respond to questions from AFP, and pointed to policies that restrict the sale of endangered species on its platforms.

But conservationists say those policies have done little to prevent Meta's platforms being used for the illegal wildlife trade.

The GI-TOC research found over 20,000 adverts for

more than 260,000 wildlife products on social media platforms between April 2024 and March 2026.

Nearly three-quarters were on Facebook, and many remained up even after being reported, said Russell Gray, a data scientist and ecologist who co-authored GI-TOC's April report.

"Even the unredacted accounts and groups we reported on publicly in the report are still live and active," he told AFP.

- 'Mindboggling' -

Conservationists and wildlife experts said that was common.

"I have not once received a response or seen any ac-

tion taken," said Tom Taylor, chief operating officer of Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand.

"Accounts that are openly breaking the law should be closed, and investigations into the criminal activities behind them should be launched."

Conservationists argue Meta is not only failing to remove content that violates its policies, but may effectively be encouraging it by allowing popular accounts to monetise content through advertising revenue and subscription models.

"This content monetisation that Facebook and Instagram push is actually in-

centivising people to commit illegal acts," said Daniel Stiles, an independent wildlife trafficking investigator.

"The more interaction and engagement they get on their account, the more money they can make," added Stiles, who co-authored the report released Monday by NGOs including Freeland, Education for Nature Vietnam and International Wildlife Trust.

Meta does not make public which accounts are in its content monetisation programmes.

But those enrolled in its subscription programme are publicly identifiable, and include an account apparently in Laos purporting to show poaching of wildlife including pangolins.

"How Meta can allow that is mindboggling," said Stiles.

- 'Lip service' -

Animals and wildlife products are offered across Meta platforms, including Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, research shows. But other platforms, including TikTok and Snapchat popular because of its disappearing post settings are also increasingly used by traffickers.

AFP reviewed examples offering everything from chimpanzees intended as pets to rhino horn for traditional medicine and pangolins for consumption. □

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Data centres emitting more CO2 than thought: study

Frankfurt, Germany

Data centres, whose expansion is being fuelled dramatically by the artificial intelligence boom, have a far bigger carbon footprint than previously estimated, a study said Tuesday. The sprawling, power-hungry sites, used to store critical IT infrastructure like servers, are being built worldwide by companies and countries as AI applications gobble ever greater computing power. This has helped to boost their greenhouse gas emissions, with a new study by Allianz Trade estimating the centres emitted 286

million tonnes of carbon dioxide in 2025.

This is 57 percent higher than estimates by the International Energy Agency, according to the group, which is the trade credit insurance arm of global insurer Allianz.

AI already accounts for between 15 and 20 percent of electricity consumption at data centres, and this share could climb to 40 percent by 2030, the report said. "Data centres are evolving from a marginal factor into a structural driver of electricity demand in many regions," said Patrick Hoffmann, se-

nior climate economist at Allianz.

Without steps to decarbonise power grids, data centre emissions would more than double by 2030, leading to an estimated \$154 billion in annual climate damages up from \$68 billion today, the report said. Climate damage related to AI workloads could exceed \$50 billion by 2030, it said. Data centres also putting huge strain on natural resources they could require 1.3 to 1.8 trillion litres of water by 2030, comparable to Switzerland's annual consumption, the

report said.

The same computing power can generate very different emission levels depending on the source of the electricity used.

In India, emissions linked to electricity exceed 600 grams of CO2 per kilowatt-hour (kWh), compared with less than 30 grams in Norway or Sweden, where power generation is largely decarbonised.

According to Allianz Trade, nearly 70 percent of global data centre emissions are currently concentrated in the United States and China, the world's AI leaders. □

Haaland scores winner to send Norway into last-16 Brazil clash

Arlington, United States

Erling Haaland scored a late winner as Norway set up a last-16 showdown with Brazil at the World Cup after taming the Ivory Coast 2-1 in Texas on Tuesday.

The Manchester City striker prodded in from close range, the ball dribbling in on 86 minutes for his fifth goal of the tournament. It was the first time that Norway had won a knockout game in the history of the competition and Haaland looked emotional afterwards.

After an even first half that was slow to get going, Antonio Nusa fired Norway into the lead six minutes before the break with one of the goals of the tournament.

Manchester United's Amad Diallo was sent on for the Ivory Coast and was immediately in the thick of it, stopping a certain second Norway goal and then grabbing a terrific equaliser on 74 minutes.

With extra time looming, predator supreme Haaland got on the end of a cross by Patrick Berg to make some Norwegian history.

They face five-time champions Brazil on Sunday in New Jersey with the quarter-finals at stake.

Norway captain Martin



Norway's forward #09 Erling Braut Haaland (C) shoots and scores his team's second goal during the 2026 World Cup round of 32 football match between Ivory Coast and Norway at the Dallas Stadium in Arlington on June 30, 2026.

Odegaard said that with Haaland they always had a chance.

"Meeting Brazil in the World Cup is as big as it can be," said the midfielder, who will face Arsenal team-mates Gabriel and Gabriel Martinelli.

"It's amazing to have him (Haaland) in the team, we're lucky to have him and it's just about giving him as many opportunities as possible."

Diallo said they gifted Norway the winner by failing to pick up Haaland in the

box. The centre forward has scored in each of his last 13 competitive internationals, hitting 25 goals along the way.

"When you leave Erling Haaland alone in a match, you pay the price," said Diallo.

"We're a little disappointed because we thought we could go further in this competition.

"But we're also proud of ourselves because we've accomplished something that previous generations perhaps hadn't man-

aged."

- Red-hot Haaland -

A match between two physical teams was tepid to begin with at the impressive air-conditioned home of the Dallas Cowboys.

The Ivory Coast players and fans were irate just before the drinks break when the livewire Yan Diomande was brought down on the break just inside his own half.

Referee Jesus Valenzuela surprisingly did not even book defender David Moller Wolfe. The 19-year-

old winger Diomande, who appears set to join European champions Paris Saint-Germain from RB Leipzig, was growing into the game. The African side, one of the youngest at the tournament, were on top and particularly threatening down Diomande's left-hand side of the pitch.

Haaland had little to feed on but might have done better with a tame header that bounced into the hands of goalkeeper Yahia Fofana.

Then came a moment of genuine class as Nusa, fed by Odegaard, cut inside and bent the ball wonderfully into the top corner.

Odegaard put his hands on his head in disbelief at the strike by the 21-year-old, Diomande's Leipzig team-mate.

Stale Solbakken's Norway finished the first half on the hunt for a second and Haaland was denied by a last-gasp block by Ibrahim Sangare, who celebrated as if scoring a goal.

The Ivory Coast, into the knockout rounds for the first time, won their 10th corner to start the second half.

Nicolas Pepe was denied by the legs of Norway stopper Orjan Nyland as the Ivory Coast piled on the pressure. □

Zverev says Wimbledon hopes 'about me' despite open draw

London, United Kingdom French Open champion Alexander Zverev insists his aim of a first deep run at Wimbledon depends purely on himself, despite being in a wide-open half of the men's draw.

The world number three came through a testing four-set battle with Belgian debutant Alexander Blockx in the opening round, winning 6-4, 6-7 (8/10), 7-6 (7/5), 7-6 (7/0) on Centre Court and will next face France's Valentin Royer.

Zverev clinched his long-awaited maiden Grand Slam title at the French Open earlier this month after several near-misses, taking full advantage of shock early exits for Jannik

Sinner and Novak Djokovic.

He has never had much joy at Wimbledon, failing to get past the last 16 in nine previous appearances.

But Sinner and Djokovic, the two favourites for the title in the absence of the injured Carlos Alcaraz, are in the opposite half of the draw.

American fourth seed Ben Shelton exited the tournament from Zverev's half on Tuesday.

"It's very different than a French Open. For me, the draw doesn't really matter, because I have played a top-10 opponent one time in my career here, which was Milos Raonic, in 2017," said Zverev.

"All the other years, I have lost to players outside of the top 10. So it's really about me.

"It's really about me getting through my matches and playing my matches, because yes, maybe the names of Jannik and Novak and all those guys, they're in the other side of the draw, but for me, that doesn't really matter, because historically I have not gotten to them.

"So for me, it's about focusing on the matches that are ahead of me to get to those names. I think that's the most important thing."

Zverev was in danger of becoming the first reigning men's Roland Garros champion to go out

in the first round at the All England Club since Rafael Nadal in 2013 at several points in the match.

But the 29-year-old dug deep to beat Blockx for the third time in as many meetings this year. □



Germany's Alexander Zverev returns the ball against Belgium's Alexander Blockx during their men's singles first round tennis match on the second day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on June 30, 2026.



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LeBron James to leave Lakers to play 24th NBA season

Los Angeles, United States

NBA superstar LeBron James will return for an unprecedented 24th season but not with the Los Angeles Lakers, a move that rocked the league on Tuesday as free agency opened.

"Truly an honor to wear the (purple and gold) while trying to continue the greatness and legacies that came before me," James, the league's all-time leading scorer, said in a post on X, replying to a "thank you" post from Lakers co-owner Jeanie Buss.

"Hope I made a few proud during my stint," he added. Buss's farewell to James on social media had confirmed multiple media reports that the 41-year-old forward would depart the Lakers after eight years.

"LeBron James is one of the greatest athletes in history," Buss wrote in a statement posted on the Lakers' X account.

"We will always be thankful for his eight years with the Lakers -- including the title he led us to in 2020 under the toughest imaginable circumstances and the countless records he broke in purple and gold."

James joined the Lakers in 2018 and led them to their 17th and most recent title in 2020 in a post-season played in the Covid "bubble".



LeBron James #23 of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles the ball during the first quarter against the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game Four of the Second Round of the NBA Western Conference Playoffs at Crypto.com Arena on May 11, 2026 in Los Angeles, California.

James's agent Rich Paul told ESPN that James had informed the Lakers of his decision "as a courtesy" so that they would be prepared for the start of free agency. Teams and players could begin talking at 6 p.m. Eastern time (2200 GMT). While players can't officially sign with teams until July 6, news of verbal agreements could emerge before then.

"King James" became a free agent after the Lakers' second-round playoff exit but had not yet confirmed that he would in-

deed continue one of the most extraordinary careers in league history, with four championships and a multitude of individual records. But with the free agency period approaching James has been linked with a possible return to Cleveland or Miami -- both clubs he led to titles -- or with a move to join his 2024 USA Olympic teammate Stephen Curry on the Golden State Warriors.

James and Curry faced off in four straight NBA Finals between 2015 and 2018, with three wins for Curry's Warriors and one for James's

Cavs.

According to ESPN, the Warriors are hoping to assemble a roster of veteran superstars, also looking to add James's former Lakers teammate Anthony Davis in a trade with the Washington Wizards.

- 'An honor' -

James's record 23rd NBA campaign got off to a rocky start last year as he missed the first month of the season because of sciatica.

Once fit he again proved remarkably effective, shooting 51.5% from the field as

he averaged 20.9 points, 6.1 rebounds and 7.2 assists in the regular season.

In the playoffs James averaged 23.2 points, 6.7 rebounds and 7.3 assists and led the Lakers to a first-round series victory over the Houston Rockets despite the absence of star teammate Luka Doncic, who was sidelined with a hamstring strain. James had helped push the Lakers to the fourth seed in the Western Conference, despite the late-season injuries to Doncic and key contributor Austin Reaves.

Doncic, 27 and acknowledged as the new lynchpin of the Lakers after his arrival in February 2025, offered his own farewell to James on Instagram with a photo captioned "An honor to play with and learn from you 'King James'".

James's tenure with the Lakers included the 2020 NBA title, in a post-season played in a Covid "bubble", and a victory in the inaugural NBA in-season tournament.

It was with the Lakers that he broke the league's all-time scoring record, and he realized his long-cherished dream of playing alongside his son, Bronny James, after the Lakers selected him in the second round of the 2024 NBA draft. □

NBA Grizzlies deal Morant to Portland: report



Memphis Grizzlies' US point guard #12 Ja Morant (R) is marked by Orlando Magic's US point guard #02 Tyus Jones (L) during the 2025/2026 NBA season basketball match between the Memphis Grizzlies and Orlando Magic at the O2 Arena in London on January 18, 2026.

New York, United States

Two-time NBA All-Star guard Ja Morant is being traded from the Memphis Grizzlies to Portland in exchange for forwards Jerami Grant and Kris Murray, ESPN reported on Monday. Morant, selected by Memphis with the second overall pick in the 2019 NBA Draft, averaged 22.4 points, 7.4 assists and 4.6 rebounds a game for the Grizzlies over seven seasons. But he played only 20 games this past season with calf and ankle injuries and was in just nine games in the 2023-24 campaign due to suspension

and a right shoulder injury.

His time in Memphis, however, was mired in controversy. In March 2023, the NBA conducted an investigation into a video of Morant displaying a gun at a Colorado nightclub, which led to an eight-game suspension. When another Instagram video in May showed him displaying a gun, he was issued a 25-game suspension for the start of the 2023-24 campaign. The Grizzlies traded forward Jaren Jackson Jr. to Utah in February and sent guard Desmond Bane to Orlando last June and Morant's departure

completes the departure of what had been a young core of stars.

The move comes just ahead of the start of NBA free agency, which could produce several moves by top names to other clubs for new contracts.

In 12 NBA seasons, Grant has averaged 13.5 points, 3.9 rebounds and 1.7 assists over 776 games for Philadelphia, Oklahoma City, Denver, Detroit and Portland.

Murray, 25, has averaged 5.3 points, 3.3 rebounds and 1.2 assists a game over three seasons with Portland. □