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# Trump's massive July 4 firework show raises health alarms



Fireworks explode in the air over the National Mall at the conclusion of UFC Freedom 250 which is being held on the South Lawn of the White House on June 15, 2026 in Washington, DC.

## Washington, United States

An "unforgettable" tribute to America, or a health hazard that will terrorize animals and pollute the environment? That's the question as Washington prepares to break the record for the world's largest fireworks display on the United States' 250th birthday on Saturday.

The Trump administration's "Freedom250" project has hired Pennsylvania-based Pyrotecnico to launch more than 850,000 fireworks shells across 10 sites around the Lincoln Memorial and Potomac River, starting at 10:30 pm and lasting 40 minutes.

That is around 40,000 more than the current Guinness World Record, set in Bocaue, Philippines in 2016, and roughly 50 times more than Washington's usual annual show.

"Freedom250" has billed it as the "unforgettable" capstone for a day of performances, flyovers and acrobatics displays at the National Mall, claiming it will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors and calling it a generational event.

They haven't however disclosed the bill for the affair and did not respond to a request seeking the sum.

"Freedom250" has billed it as the "unforgettable" capstone for a day of performances, flyovers and acrobatics displays at the National Mall, claiming it will bring hundreds of thousands of visitors and calling it a generational event.

### - 'Frightening' numbers -

"Fireworks are a tried-and-true American tradition," Jodi Dague, Pyrotecnico's director of marketing, told AFP. "They bring back childhood memories and allow families to create new ones.

It's a reason to gather and celebrate."

Not everyone is convinced.

"First let me say, I like fireworks -- I think they're fun," Russell Dickerson, a professor of atmospheric chemistry at the University of Maryland told AFP, but said the number in question was "frightening."

"In my professional opinion, it's probably ill-advised to try to set off 850,000 fireworks... on a hot, stagnant, already polluted day. I'm not going down to the Mall and I certainly would not bring my grandchildren there."

The biggest concern is fine particulate matter, he explained -- particles 2.5 micrometers or smaller that can penetrate deep into the lungs, enter the bloodstream and even cross the blood-brain barrier.

The EPA's 24-hour standard caps exposure at 35 micrograms per cubic meter. After a fireworks show, "it dissipates substantially in a few hours, but in those few hours, people are going to be exposed to huge amounts," Dickerson said, adding that the smoke could cut visibility to a few hundred yards.

Making matters worse is a heat wave gripping the East Coast, with firework smoke and pollution liable to last longer without rain to clear it, and hot weather itself increasing background levels of pollution as the power grid strains under increased demand for cooling and as vehicles emit more.

"The amount of pollution that we produce is apocalyptic during this one particular day," Glory Dolphin Hammes, CEO of IQAir's North American division, told AFP.

Data compiled by the Swiss-based company from public and private sources showed that hourly PM2.5 in Washington peaked at 11 pm on July Fourth, last year at 133 micrograms per cubic meter. The Air Quality Index peaked at 208, levels more commonly associated with South Asian cities.

Epidemiologically, PM2.5 spikes are linked to a rise in emergency room visits, Hammes said, with longer-term impacts on heart and lung health from chronic exposure.

Beyond particulate matter, fireworks contain trace metals that produce their bright colors, and burning them releases harmful volatile organic compounds.

### - Sounds of freedom -

Fireworks are also traumatizing for pets, particularly dogs, which tremble and even bolt from their homes in fear.

Adrian Aceves, a physician living in downtown Washington, said he'd be staying in with his five-year-old mutt Rosy, "trying to distract her with treats and toys, and I will medicate her."

Then there's wildlife: a recent European study found Arctic migratory geese flew away from their sleeping sites in response to New Year's Eve fireworks and never returned. □

# Miami's Haitian Leaders reject 'unjust' Supreme Court TPS decision



New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams speaks at a news conference and rally at a Manhattan union headquarters to show his support for the Haitian and Syrian communities after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the Trump administration could end the legal status for potentially millions of foreign nationals from countries experiencing conflict and violence, like Haiti and Syria, on June 25, 2026 in New York City.

## Miami, United States

Leaders of the Haitian community in Miami on Monday slammed a Supreme Court decision allowing the Trump administration to strip people from that destitute country of a special status protecting them from deportation.

Last week, the high court said the Trump administration could end Temporary Protected Status (TPS) for Haitians and some 6,000 Syrians without judicial review, although the impact of the decision could apply to migrants from many other backgrounds.

An estimated 350,000 Haitians live in the United States. "Today is a painful moment for the Haitian community," Vanessa Joseph, president of the National Haitian American Elected Officials Network, said at a press conference in the Little Haiti neighborhood of Miami.

TPS provides protection from deportation for people from countries designated as unsafe because of war, natural disasters or other extraordinary circumstances. Since Donald Trump's return to the presidency in 2025, as part of his fierce crackdown on immigration, his administration has revoked TPS for migrants from more than a dozen countries, including Venezuela, Nicaragua, Honduras, and Somalia.

In Miami-Dade County, home to large numbers of migrants, including some 110,000 Haitians, the high court's decision has plunged many into uncertainty.

"We are hearing from families who are frightened and desperate for answers," said Thamara Labrousse, executive director of Sant La Haitian Neighborhood Center. "They are asking: will I lose my job? Is it safe for my children to go back to school? Will I be separated from my children?"

Jean Monestime, a Haitian American candidate for Congress, said the government should have to show that the situation in Haiti has demonstrably improved in order to justify ending TPS.

Haiti for decades has suffered from abject poverty, corruption, political instability and natural disasters like a devastating earthquake in 2010.

Its last president was assassinated in 2021 and has not been replaced. Haiti has not held an election of any kind since 2016. It is the poorest country in the Americas.

Since early 2024, Haiti has also been suffering a wave of violence and other crime from powerful gangs that control nearly all of Port-au-Prince and the country's main roads. □

## 'Job forever': trade schools are all the rage in the AI era

### New York, United States

Long looked down upon, skilled trades are booming in the United States, especially among young adults drawn by strong demand even as artificial intelligence (AI) eats into service-sector jobs.

"I think it's definitely shifting," said Nizier Lawrence, in his early twenties.

Prior to the pandemic, "people weren't really talking about going to trade school, vocational schools, stuff like that. It was like: 'Go to college, get your four years.'"

The New Yorker spent three years at Keuka College, a private school upstate, before changing plans. "I wanted a break," he remembers, partly because he was "homesick" for the city.

He subsequently enrolled at Apex Technical School in Manhattan to train as an electrician and hasn't looked back.

"I'm learning more in three weeks than I did in college in three years," he says.

#### - AI and job security -

Students here don't have much to say about AI, but they quickly turn to job security, reflecting a concern that stands in contrast with the US's low unemployment rate of roughly four



A student participates in a hands-on class of the Advanced Electrical program at Apex Technical School in Manhattan, New York, on June 4, 2026.

percent. Among 27- to 39-year-olds who use AI multiple times a week, only 22 percent believe their jobs are "safe from being eliminated," according to payroll group ADP's People at Work 2026 report.

"I think a lot of people should probably pivot towards trade," said Lawrence. "You'll have a job forever, you're gonna make a lot of money."

"They'll always need electricians," said Anthony Byrd, one of Lawrence's classmates. "Everything is powered by electricity right

now. Without us, the whole world would probably fall apart."

The rise of AI has sparked a boom in data center construction, creating a need for numerous skilled tradespeople especially electricians.

Employment of electricians is projected to grow 9 percent from 2024 to 2034, much faster than the average for all occupations, according to a report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics released two years ago.

#### 'Craving connectedness' -

The student body has been getting younger, with "a lot more students from the high schools" enrolling at Apex Technical School, said Zelda Cuesta, agency coordinator.

In the past, administrators "frowned upon trade schools, they wanted to steer everybody to go to college."

Now, "when I go to a high school, I'm a rock star," Cuesta said.

Many students point out that while the cost of training is significant totaling around \$18,000 it is far less than the cost of university,

which is estimated at over \$38,000 per year in the United States, according to data website Education Data Initiative.

Not to mention that a university degree takes at least four years to complete, whereas Apex trains an electrician in seven months on average.

According to the Department of Labor, the average salary for an electrician surged by 55 percent between 2015 and 2025.

"When I do the tour and they come in to visit the school, I do reinforce AI is not going to be able to take over our jobs," Cuesta said.

"Buildings will still have pipes running through them, they'll still have wires running through them," she said. Apex also trains plumbers, HVAC technicians, welders and cooks.

An advisor with the culinary program, Amy Quazza, thinks "we kind of drift back to tradition when things are untethered or feeling untethered," which explains the renewed appeal of old-economy trades.

Beyond the threat of AI, Cuesta connects this newfound popularity of manual trades to the pandemic and long periods of confinement. □

## Progress, further delay risk for Boeing Air Force One: report

### New York, United States

Boeing has made progress on its much-delayed new planes for the U.S. president dubbed Air Force One when the leader is on board but the project remains vulnerable to potential further postponement, a government report said Thursday.

The order for two new specially equipped Boeing 747-8 aircraft, known as the VC-25B, are currently scheduled for delivery in mid-2028 and mid-2029. The planes were originally targeted for delivery by the end of 2024.

"Boeing made progress on some of the schedule risks that we previously reported" including the comple-

tion of the engineering design for the environmental control system and hiring and Boeing's hiring of "more qualified mechanics," according to an annual weapons report from the US Government Accountability Office.

"Other schedule risks remain, including the detailed designs for the aircraft interiors, fabrication of the wire bundles, and rework to correct defects in structural modifications," the report said.

Signed in 2018 during President Donald Trump's first term, the contract aimed for initial delivery of a plane by the end of 2024.

The famed aircraft has

been back in the news this week when Trump, now back in office, took his first flight aboard a new Air Force One plane -- a Boeing 747-800 gifted to him by Qatar last year and rapidly retrofitted.

Trump used the plane to fly to North Dakota to attend an event at the Theodore Roosevelt Presidential Library as part of celebrations for the 250th anniversary of American independence.

#### - 'Exceptional' planes -

Critics have raised a host of ethical, constitutional and security concerns about the gifting of an aircraft worth hundreds of millions of dollars by a foreign pow-

er like Qatar.

The Qatar plane is expected to serve as a stopgap until the Boeing planes are delivered.

Boeing deferred questions about the timeframe to

the Air Force but said it is an "honor to be entrusted" with the contract.

"We continue to make steady progress on the VC-25B program," a Boeing spokesperson said. □



U.S. President Donald Trump disembarks from Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland on July 1, 2026.

# Ceuzany, Cape Verde's golden voice with volcanic emotion

## Mindelo, Cape Verde

Barefoot, arms raised and teeming with emotion, Ceuzany belts out the signature track from her latest album, a song dedicated to the fight against domestic violence, in a powerful voice that sends shivers through the Cape Verde bar.

From the very first notes the deep yet soaring timbre of the song, part of a new generation of Cape Verdean music, sparks applause.

"Enough! We're calling it quits, go your own way, I am happy without you," several women sing from the audience, joining the musician who is moved to tears.

On this late-May evening in Mindelo, a city on the archipelago nation's Sao Vicente island, passersby who recognise the singer stop in the street to join the concert.

Ceuzany's voice ranges from crystalline highs to deep lows, as she performs everything from jazz to slam, commanding the stage with wavy blonde hair and earrings framing her radiant face.

The day before she radiated infectious energy under the bright lights of a music video shoot, dancing with abandon in a silver rhine-



Cape Verdean singer Ceuzany Pires sings next to composer and guitarist Hernani Almeida during a concert at a bar in Mindelo, on May 26, 2026.

stone suit and Panama hat to the galvanising percussion of her latest and fourth album.

The record blends saxophone, percussion and the cavaquinho, a popular four-stringed instrument, although some songs are more stripped down, featuring Ceuzany's voice and an acoustic piano, or a swaying zouk rhythm set against the warm sound of the ukulele.

"I started singing at age 12 in a competition in Cape Verde, and I haven't stopped since," Ceuzany Pires, 35, told AFP with a

beaming smile. "My grandmother had dreamed of becoming a renowned artist in Cape Verde, but her parents didn't want her to sing," said the mother of two.

"She was always singing serenades at home and I was always listening. It is thanks to her that I have this taste for music and that I deeply love singing," she added.

**- 'Soul coming through' -** Ceuzany is often compared to the legendary Cesaria Evora, the "barefoot diva"

who introduced the world to two traditional genres of Cap Verdean music: morna, which is characterized by soft, nostalgic melodies and coladeira, which features a faster rhythm.

"Ceuzany is one of Cesaria Evora's heirs, as she is a great morna singer," said her producer, Jose Da Silva, who has served as producer for both women.

"Ceuzany is capable of injecting a bit of rap into coladeira. She is just as comfortable with urban music artists as she is with traditional ones," he said.

Warm and funny, Ceuzany is also "a true daughter of Mindelo, she possesses that same spontaneity that Cesaria had".

The singer herself says that she is "immensely honoured" to be part of the Cesaria Evora Orchestra, which performs around the world to keep alive the music of the "barefoot diva" who died in 2011.

For musician Hernani Almeida, who arranged Ceuzany's latest album and composed several of its songs, she is unique among the new generation.

"When Ceuzany sings, you feel soul coming through," said the guitarist, adding that "it really touches people".

**- 'Queens' -** Ceuzany's songs evoke Mindelo, the ups and downs of love, and difficult topics like the ravages of crack cocaine ("pedra") on the impoverished archipelago located off west Africa.

She says her fourth album is very special to her "because it deals with domestic violence".

"I've been through it," Ceuzany said, explaining that "I gathered the strength to leave a toxic relationship" that lasted nearly five years. The title track and single "No tchal te li" ("We stop here") tells the story of a romance that sours into a cycle of physical and emotional abuse.

Ceuzany, who has since received numerous messages and has engaged with women who are victims of domestic violence, has turned the song into an anthem of liberation and self-empowerment.

"I believe women deserve to be treated like queens. That's the message I want to share with all women, in Cape Verde and across the world, because if I managed to leave a toxic relationship, you can do it too," she said, unable to hold back tears. The artist is at a pivotal moment in her career, seeing the first signs of international recognition. □

## U.S. actor Danny Glover says he has Alzheimer's

**Los Angeles, United States** "Lethal Weapon" star Danny Glover revealed Wednesday that he has Alzheimer's disease and

is leaning on his family for support as he lives with the incurable condition. The actor, who appeared in critical hits including

"The Color Purple" and "Mandela," as well as all four installments of Mel Gibson's maverick cop franchise, told NBC's Lester Holt he has been coping with the condition for several years.

"I can live with it, in a sense," said Glover, 79. "I'm sure as it advances, things are going to be different and changing."

Glover said the neurodegenerative disease has affected his speech and slowed his movement, but that his family help him.

"They've got my back," he said.

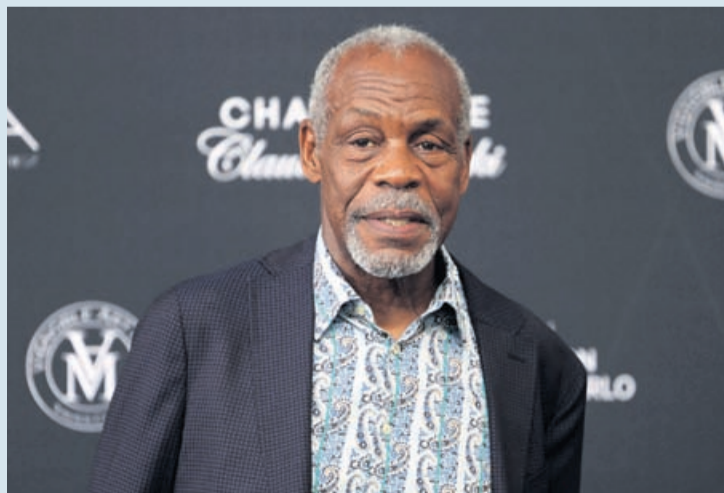
Glover, who won an honorary Academy Award in 2022 in recognition of his

humanitarian work, is a prolific actor with an impressive range.

Memorable cinematic roles have included a corrupt police officer in the Harrison Ford thriller "Witness" and a comedy turn in Wes Anderson's eccentric "The Royal Tenenbaums," opposite Gene Hackman.

He has also had a prolific television career, with recurring roles in standards including "Hill Street Blues" and "ER."

Alzheimer's disease is an incurable type of dementia that affects memory, thinking and behavior and progressively worsens, according to The Alzheimer's Association. □



U.S. actor, producer and humanitarian Danny Glover poses during the opening ceremony of the 61th Monte-Carlo Television Festival in Monaco, on June 17, 2022.

## Budding chefs cook up new career at China's BBQ academy

### Yueyang, China

Hunched over sizzling grills and shrouded in smoke, trainees at the Yueyang Barbecue Academy in southern China roast skewer after skewer of succulent beef tendon, perfecting the skills that could land them a restaurant job.

Zhang Tengfei, a former factory worker who spent a decade in the car industry, joined China's first dedicated barbecue school hoping to launch a career behind the grill.

"When I was laid off... I was at a loss for a while," Zhang, 34, told AFP at the academy in Hunan province, handing a fistful of lightly charred kebabs to an instructor for review.

Looking "to start my own business", Zhang now plans to open a stall in his hometown in Henan province to provide for his wife and three children.

With China's economy slowing and well-paying jobs in traditional sectors harder to come by, many blue-collar workers like Zhang are looking to re-train.

For him and his classmates, the month-long barbecue course, which costs students 5,800 yuan (around \$850), offers hope of new employment as chefs or restaurateurs.



This picture taken on June 16, 2026 shows trainees preparing foodstuffs for a practical session at Yueyang Barbecue Academy in Yueyang, in southern China's Hunan province.

At the academy on the banks of a quiet lake in Yueyang city, trainees spend six days a week learning to cook ingredients from aubergine to pork belly, and how to run a kitchen, market their products and turn a profit. Though the academy only admitted its first batch of students in April, founder Jiang Zongfu aims to train 10,000 grill masters within five years.

### - 'Straight into business' -

Interest is high, with more than 4,000 applicants for

just 45 spaces on the June course, the academy's second cohort.

They include novices straight out of education, laid-off construction workers and barbecue business owners seeking new inspiration. "Barbecue requires very little investment, and the risk is low. One barbecue stove can support a family, so it's a very good way to alleviate unemployment," Jiang said.

Graduates from the first tranche have already established street stalls across

China and a restaurant in Vietnam.

Xu Shuai, a 24-year-old who quit his job in social media marketing to join the course, plans to use short-video platforms to promote a restaurant after he graduates.

"I can combine barbecuing with my previous work experience, which will be an advantage for me," Xu said after attending a class on editing videos for Douyin China's version of TikTok.

"The academy allows me to get started quickly. After just one month, I can get

straight into business."

After morning theory classes, chefs teach practical skills in the afternoon.

In the classroom, trainees crowded around instructor Luo Duocheng as he demonstrated slicing a slab of beef, marinating it, and skewering the meat to form identical kebabs.

"Barbecue isn't something anyone can just see once and then do it," Luo said after his class.

"How they turn the food on the barbecue should be correct, the taste should be standard, and the food should look good."

### - Fiery competition -

To graduate, trainees must pass an exam where they cook for a panel of expert judges.

But even with their grilling certificate, success is not assured.

Graduates will enter an economy struggling with weak consumer demand, where year-on-year retail sales contracted for the first time in three years in May, and revenue in the catering sector rose a paltry 0.6 percent.

"There's a lot of competition because the barrier to entry is quite low," said Zhu Zhilong, a restaurant owner and teacher at the academy. □

## Reviving Montenegro's 'ancient' olive tree

### Montenegro

At the edge of rugged Montenegrin foothills, a years-long effort to save one of the country's oldest olive trees, which locals say dates back millennia, is finally bearing fruit -- literally. The tree in the town of Bar was successfully harvested in October for the first time in four seasons, following years of urgent restorative work.

"It is believed that the ancient Greeks brought it here," House of Olives executive director Marija Markoc told AFP, from under its canopy.

The House of Olives, a public company tasked with maintaining the tree, was established by the local government as part of

an effort to save it after its health began to decline rapidly in 2022.

Earlier this month, little green fruit once again tipped the tree's gnarled branches, a positive sign for future harvests from the tree, which is closely tied to the small community of Mirovica.

"They identify with how much it has managed to overcome, and with the fact that it is once again bearing fruit and surviving." Olive trees dot the surroundings of the coastal town, with several said to date back thousands of years.

Markoc said that laboratory testing of trees in the

region conducted in 2015 placed Mirovica's tree at 2,250 years which was not even the oldest.

That age would put it among some of the oldest living olive trees in the world but the species is notoriously difficult to date, with previous analyses on similarly "ancient" trees having difficulty pinpointing exact ages.

A 2024 study of the trees in Lebanon found that one roughly double the size of Mirovica's could be at least 1,000 years old -- but most tree samples tested were between 500 and 600 years old.

### - Blood feuds to leisure cruises -

Regardless, for locals, the folklore surrounding the tree's historic roots has made it a symbol of Mirovica, whose name derives from the Montenegrin word for peace, owing to

its role as a meeting place between warring clans.

"It has seen a great deal, it has seen various reconciliations, and it has seen the suppression of blood feuds," Markoc said. □



This photograph shows the old olive tree of the town of Bar, southern Montenegro, on July 1, 2026.

# Bones of contention: More research needed on 'd'Artagnan corpse'

## The Hague, Netherlands

It's a story worthy of Alexandre Dumas himself.

After an illegal dig by an archaeologist who stuffed ancient remains in a plastic shopping bag, the world is no closer to knowing whether a skeleton uncovered months ago in a Dutch church belongs to d'Artagnan of Three Musketeers fame.

Following months of speculation and media reports of bungled investigations, the city hall of Maastricht, where the bones were discovered, finally admitted on Thursday that six more months of research were needed.

The dig was initially conducted by archaeologist Wim Dijkman, who worked without a permit or the usual precise methodology required, said Gilbert Soeters, an archaeologist from Maastricht city hall.

"It was a former colleague who was first to do the dig. Well, actually the word 'dig' isn't exactly right. This was not an archaeological dig," Soeters told reporters Thursday.



This photograph shows the inside of the Peter and Paul church in Maastricht where a skeleton which could belong to d'Artagnan, the French soldier who inspired the novel *The Three Musketeers*, was found in an excavation pit opened in the floor, on March 27, 2026.

The city authorities hastily took over with an "emergency excavation" but the damage of the first dig has hampered their ability to state once and for all whether or not the bones are d'Artagnan's.

"We would have liked to know exactly where certain remains, placed in a small box in a shopping bag,

came from," said Soeters. "That would have considerably simplified the mystery with which we are now confronted," he added. Dijkman is currently facing legal action. Repeated AFP efforts to contact him have proved unsuccessful. "Because no archaeological documentation was prepared in accordance

with the usual standards before the emergency excavation, part of the archaeological context has been lost," said city hall officials in a statement.

"The loss of information limits the possibilities for fully interpreting the grave and the skeleton."

- 'Too much fish' -

The jury is therefore still out on whether the bones buried beneath the church belong to d'Artagnan, the swashbuckling French soldier who inspired Dumas and a series of TV adaptations.

"The characteristics of the skeleton are consistent with what is known historically about d'Artagnan, but they are not specific enough to allow a definitive identification. Further research is therefore needed," said authorities.

Initial studies have however revealed the person ate too much fish for someone like d'Artagnan, who came from Lupiac in southern France.

"Analysis of the collagen in the collected samples clearly showed that this person consumed a large amount of saltwater fish: fish accounted for between 27 and 30 percent of his usual diet," city officials said.

"This proportion is exceptionally high and does not match the profile of a Gascon, who spent a large part of his life in Paris and Lille," they added. □

## Japan deploys bear cameras in mountains as attacks surge

### Tokyo, Japan

Japan has begun installing hundreds of cameras in its northern mountains as part of a nationwide survey of the bear population following a surge in maulings, an official told AFP on Thursday.

Bears have killed at least five people since April 1, all in the northern region of Tohoku, after a record 13 fatal attacks across the country in the last fiscal year, according to the environment ministry.

The animals have grown in numbers in recent years, a trend scientists attribute in part to a declining number of people living in rural areas.

Residents in Tohoku live in constant fear, with national media providing daily coverage of bear sightings at shopping arcades, parks and schools.

To draw up an effective response, authorities plan to use more than 800 cameras to monitor the animals, initially targeting six major bear populations in Tohoku before expanding the survey across the country over the next four years, environment ministry official Yu Takahashi told AFP.



A robotic wolf-shaped deterrent device is pictured outside a convenience store at a rural area in Kiryu city, where bear sightings have been increasing, in Gunma Prefecture on July 1, 2026.

Jars of honey mixed with wine placed at about human-head height are meant to attract the bears. The cameras will then capture each animal's unique white chest marks as it stands on its hind legs to

sniff the sweet tonic.

"Until now, local governments surveyed bear populations in their jurisdictions at various times and using various methods," Takahashi said.

"Our plan is to conduct a more accurate survey by focusing on population groups," he said.

Meanwhile, a man was arrested on Thursday for obstruction of business, police spokesman Kenji Goto told AFP, after he had accidentally set off anti-bear spray in a post office in Nagoya city.

Five people needed hospital treatment after the incident on Wednesday, reports and officials said.

The 22-year-old Vietnamese national, identified by police as Huynh Nhat Duy, apologised and told officers he had discharged the repellent unintention-

ally, according to media reports.

### - Urban sightings -

In recent months there has been a jump in sightings after the bears emerged from hibernation, and more bears have been straying into urban areas.

This week, authorities said they were investigating a possible sixth fatality after a man's body with bite marks was found in a mountainous area in Tohoku.

Authorities recommend people avoid going alone into the mountains -- which make up some 80 percent of Japan and to attach a bell to their bags, and carry bear sprays. These aerosols, sold in outdoor activity stores, contain capsaicin the chemical component in spicy chili peppers and cause a burning and irritating sensation. □

## How Aruban beaches came to be!



**(Oranjestad)—We've talked about the best beaches to visit on the island before, but have you ever wondered how Aruba got its white, sandy beaches, and why there's a clear difference between the northern and southern shores? Here are some fun facts about the development of Aruban beaches. How did Aruba get its white, sandy**

**beaches?**

Aruba's beaches have developed over the span of thousands of years. Waves crashing on the rocky formations along our coast line (which consists mainly of coral reefs) have started to wear and tear the reefs over time, resulting in its gradual breakdown. Fish that feed off corals also

contribute to this—one small bite at a time. Over the course of thousands of years, as waves continue to crash and fish continue to eat off the corals, sand starts to accumulate around the area. However, whether the sand stays there is another question to be answered, and this is where we highlight the biggest difference between



the northern and southern coast of the island.

were swept away with the current!

The sand that accumulates around a torn coral reef is swept away along with the debris by the ocean stream. However, in areas where it's shallow and the stream is weaker, the sand tends to stick to the bottom faster. This is why the beaches in the south—the areas with weaker stream and shallower ocean floors—has sand that stretches for miles. In contrast, the northern area, where the stream is much stronger and the ocean floor is much deeper, there is no sand present—they

**Why is the north deep, but the south shallow?**

Aruba is a continental island. The island actually forms part of South America, and the space between Aruba and the South American continent is simply referred to as land that runs under the ocean. This is why it gets gradually deeper in the south, whereas the ocean floor in the north runs steeply to the bottom. □

**Source: archival document provided by the National Archive of Aruba (ANA).**

## Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!

**(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building "Cocolishi", is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.**

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually referring to two separate buildings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower.



That's right, the iconic 5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called "Willem III Toren". Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to protect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable

characters roaming the Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era).

Over the years, both the fort and the tower had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cultural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the commercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offer-

ing a glance into how the social culture of the town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm.

**Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.**





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## Watch out for Blue Crab Migration near Savaneta



(Oranjestad)—The department of nature & environment in Aruba are urging motorists to watch out for blue crabs crossing the road in Pos Chiquito to make their way to the ocean.

They added a new bright yellow road sign with "Land Crab Crossing" to remind people to be cautious while driving on the highway on Pos Chiquito with blue crabs.

Blue crabs in Aruba are found plenty near the beach areas, especially in Pos Chiquito, because of the amount of mangroves. They are known to dig holes deep in

the beach sand in seek of humidity.

The diet of blue crabs consists of decomposed trees, insects, scorpions and rest of dead animals.

Nesting season for blue crabs is between June & July.

**Why protect blue crabs?**

Because they are of high value for the ecology of the mangroves. Conserving the blue crabs is crucial for the preservation of mangroves.

Watch out for crossing blue crabs on the highway near Pos Chiquito & Santo Largo. ☐

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Aruba's nature is to be cherished



The national park Arikok comprises almost 18 % of the island. Its rugged terrain, desert-like hills filled with tall cacti, breathtaking coastline and protected local flora and fauna welcome you to be explored. There are more places on the island that are a preserved area like the Bubali Plas which is a bird sanctuary.

The national park Arikok takes you on a memorable journey of the island's past offering unique geological, cultural and historical sites. These can all be enjoyed

and explored either on your own or during guided tours. A wide variety of educational and informative programs and fun activities is available.

Did you know that four of the in total seven species of sea turtle lay their eggs on Aruba's beaches during breeding season? In the national park, a Least Tern (*Sternula antillarum*) keeps a strict eye on a very special event taking place below on the beach: a majestic Leatherback (*Dermochelys coriacea*) heads back to sea after laying her eggs,

while another nest laid 2 months ago by the same female hatches. A very rare occurrence of daytime nesting and hatching. Sea turtles prefer nesting in the cool and dark hours of the night. And hatchlings usually wait for the cue of cooling surface sand before emerging.

Bubali Magic

This beautiful close-up image of the pink bird is courtesy of Michiel Oversteegen of the Aruba Birdlife Conservation. This important foundation showcases and builds awareness of Aruba's birds and other native flora and fauna. You may have seen a 'pink cloud' lately at the Bubali or Spanish Lagoon Wetlands areas? It's most likely to be Roseate Spoonbills (*Ajaia ajaja*) or 'Chucharon Cora' as they are known in Papiamentu. This unusual looking bird forages in shallow muddy water while sweeping its flattened bill from side to



side to catch small fish, crustaceans and other aquatic invertebrates. The Roseate Spoonbill remains an uncommon sight as they are vulnerable to degradation of feeding and nesting habitats (Wetlands).

The afore mentioned is just a part of what Aruba's nature has to offer. We cannot stress enough to go, see for yourself. The island has the most beautiful beaches but it is also worthwhile to go beyond this and get an idea of our entire island. Lately there is a discussion going on about the effect

certain activities have on our nature, for example the ATV vehicles cause a lot of dust, noise and leave tire tracks. Animals live in these areas where the vehicles run, often with high speed and with detrimental consequences to flora and fauna. Motorized vehicles are forbidden to drive on the sand dunes in the Northern part of the island and all beaches in Aruba are forbidden for any motorized vehicle. Treasure our island to enjoy it like you do: as a tropical and natural paradise. We truly appreciate it! □

PSA for off-roaders:

Be careful when driving on rough terrains!

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today recently received a message from a reader about the rough terrains and dirt roads on the northern side of the island, worried about how they may damage your car.

We at Aruba Today pride ourselves in enhancing your Aruba experience through informative articles about our history, culture and places you can visit. With this, we also want to make sure you take care of yourself and your loved ones.

You may encounter some dirt roads that have deep holes or cracks that can be damaging if

you are traveling by (regular) car. These holes often occur after heavy rain or during the raining season, primarily because Aruba is a hilly island with a lot of downward streams, so rain water travels downward creating cracks and holes along the way.

For your own safety, please be advised to not drive on potentially dangerous terrains or dirt roads with deep holes if you are traveling by regular car. We advise you to rent a 4x4 vehicle instead or better yet, plan your off-roading trip with a tour guide who can provide proper vehicles and assistance. □



## The stories of “Compa Nanzi”

(Oranjestad)—The most popular character you may hear about in the Caribbean is Anansi, known locally on Aruba as “Compa Nanzi”. Local children grew up hearing the tales of the conniving spider, and his legacy forms part of the oral narrative tradition that is common in Aruba.

Although the stories are most popular in the Caribbean, “Compa Nanzi” is not entirely unknown globally, especially not in the West African region. Brought to the “new world” by enslaved Africans from Ghana, the historical thread of how Nanzi was introduced on Aruba follows the enslaved Africans in Curacao during the colonial era, which saw the biggest population of enslaved Africans in the Dutch Caribbean.

The stories of Compa Nanzi were a sign of hope for freedom among the slaves, who passed around different stories involving the famous spider through word of mouth, due to not being able to express their native culture in the new world. These stories were a way to not only preserve their culture, but it acted as a medium for relief during the harsh treatment to

which they were subjected to.

It wasn't until the end of the nineteenth century that the stories of Nanzi were written down in different languages. However, not all stories are completely alike in every country, as is the risk of oral story telling. However, one thing will always be dominant in Compa Nanzi's stories: his sneaky ways to get what he wants!

How Nanzi fooled the king  
One day Nanzi was taking a stroll near the castle of Shon Arei, the king. He had this sudden urge to walk in. He didn't think too much about it and committed to what he had in mind. It was a warm afternoon, and the castle personnel were taking their afternoon nap. Even the soldier guarding the castle door was fast asleep, snoring so loud that his beard bounced up and down on his chin. Nanzi just slipped past him, looked back for a moment then walk right on in.

Nanzi stumbled upon the king's quarters. With all his excitement he sat in the king's throne, and put on his crown that was hanging on the side of the throne. It was very hot that day, and it wasn't long until Nanzi too

fell asleep, right there on the king's throne. He was so deep in sleep and snoring so loud, that even when the king found him in his seat, Nanzi did not even notice.

Shon Arei was flabbergasted by the sight of Nanzi on his throne, wearing his crown. How disrespectful! “Soldiers, get him!” he commanded. Nanzi was sound asleep, but when the soldiers picked him up, he jumped from fright. By then though, the soldier already had him in their hold.

“Put him in a sack, stitch it up and throw him in the ocean!” the king said furiously. Two soldiers immediately entered the chamber, took the crown off Nanzi's head and pushed him in a sack.

Nanzi was terrified; it looks like this time he won't get away with his schemes. To get to the ocean, the soldier walked a long distance, and where beginning to feel very thirsty. Luckily they passed by a pub, and decided to have a nice cold beer. They set the sack with Nanzi in it outside and went to enjoy the refreshments. Nanzi was still trembling with fear in the sack.

What is that he hears? A herd of sheep walking by?



“Compadre, listen here!” Nanzi screamed as loud as he could. The sheep herder got close to the sack. “What is this?”

“Man, there is something very beautiful in here that you can see. It's very rare and strange, but indeed, there is something so beautiful in here that you've never seen or will ever see,” Nanzi told the herder.

The herder, very dumb, believed Nanzi's word. “Let me see!” he said.

“Well if you must insist,” Nanzi said, “I'll let you take a look, but only for a quick second.” The herder opened the sack, and Nanzi immediately jumped out. Before the herder could even take a look into the sack, Nanzi pushed him in it, and the herder fell head first in.

Nanzi didn't waste any time, and closed off the sack real tight. He then picked up the herder's hat and starting walking behind the traveling sheep as if nothing happened. After a little while, the soldiers headed back outside to continue their journey. As they picked up the sack, the poor herder started screaming to let him out, but the soldiers ignored him, thinking it was Nanzi.

Shon Arei went strolling a while later. He thought to himself: “This time Nanzi could not get away with

his foolishness. He probably drowned in that sack ages ago.” That is why, when he saw Nanzi walk behind the herd of sheep on the street, he was flabbergasted again. “Nanzi! Aren't you suppose to be at the bottom of the ocean floor?”

“I was, Your Majesty,” Nanzi replied. But you know what; there are so many things to see down there in the sack! Like this herd of sheep. Seeing that they had no herder, I started walking behind them and gained their trust pretty quickly. At the bottom of the ocean there are so many wonderful things, like diamonds, and bags of gold. Chests of silver and other precious stones,” Nanzi told the king.

“What is that you say?” the king was intrigued. “I want to see it too!”

The king immediately demanded to his soldiers to be put in a sack and be placed in the ocean. Naturally, Shon Arei died because of this. He was never found again. Nanzi followed the soldier back to the castle, where sat once again on the late king's throne and put his crown on. He took possession of all of Shon Arei's belongings, and lived the rest of his life as king. □

Story and pictures are from “Kon Nanzi a Nek Shon Arei (i otro kuentanan antiano di e araña sabi)” by Nilda Pinto.



## Don't forget to visit Aruba's famous "Red" Anchor

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark – a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea. Usually a bright red color, the anchor was painted blue this year in celebration of the 50th anniversary of Aruba's flag and anthem.

### Where to find the anchor?

The anchor is a "must see" landmark when you visit Aruba. It is among the most photographed historical landmarks for the island. You want to make sure you add this stop on your itinerary when you're visiting the south coast of Aruba. The bright red anchor against the backdrop of the deep blue Caribbean Sea and the azure blue skies, make a great backdrop for your vacation pictures.

The anchor is located at the entrance to Gate 6 to the former Lago Colony. It is on the outskirts of Seroe Colorado, on the south east point of the island at the "T" junction to Baby Beach.

Depending on where you are staying on the island, follow the signs that indicate the way to Baby Beach. Once you reach the T-junction, it will be right in front of you.

### About the anchor

#### Size

It will be hard to miss the anchor, it's huge! The anchor that weighs 21,772 kilos is approximately 10 feet 6 inches wide and 15 feet, 6 inches tall.

On the anchor there are some numbers. The 4112 and 4115, which are believed to be the serial numbers that refer to the "fluke" or horizontal and vertical parts of the anchor, respectively. The number 21772K refers to the weight of the anchor in kilos.

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry



located in Germany.

### Where did the anchor come from?

There are a number of stories as to the origins of the anchor, which one do you think it was? (Unfortunately the mystery has never been solved, so your imagination can pick which one you think it might be!)

#### Story 1:

"According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that

they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain."

#### Story 2:

"Mr. Curiel also said that at one time a small tanker with a Korean crew, while lifting their anchor also lifted another anchor near the inner harbor. When the ship asked for assistance, he went with his tugboat along with a

barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them."

### How did the anchor become a landmark?

Sometime between 1980 and 1985, three gentlemen (Mr. Wim Martinus – the Harbormaster of Aruba; Mr. August Genser – the ex-Division Superintendent of Lago's Laboratory; and Mr. Willie Davis), were having a conversation with Mr. Charlie Brouns Jr., local businessman. Charlie, who was a visionary and had dreams for developing the San Nicolas area, told these gentlemen that he would like to come up with something innovative for the San Nicolas area to draw tourism to the area.

The "anchor", which at that time was being stored at the Oranjestad harbor, was suggested as an option. Charlie liked the idea! He then contacted the President of Lago for permission to acquire the anchor. He was granted permission and the anchor was then relocated to its present location and dedicated "To All Seamen" on the occasion of the closing of the Lago Oil Refinery on March 31, 1985.

### Through the years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

After Charles Brouns Jr. died on September 15, 2004, his friend Mr. Sam Speziale, requested assistance from the management of Valero Aruba Refinery to help maintain the monument. The Valero Aruba Refinery graciously sandblasted and painted the anchor and poured a concrete pad around it. On April 17, 2005, the anchor monument was rededicated "To All Seamen" in a formal ceremony in memory of Charles Brouns Jr.

Today, the anchor stands both as memorial to all seaman who have lost their lives at sea, but also as a silent reminder that Seroe Colorado is part of San Nicolas and that San Nicolas is still a vibrant and important part of the island of Aruba.

### The best time to visit

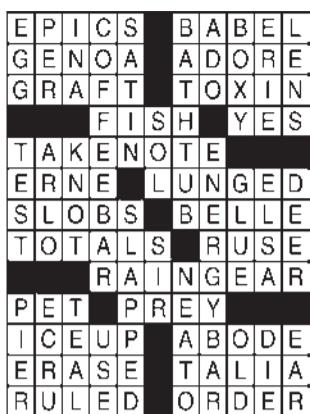
When you're planning your visit to the south end of the island, you will want to include in your itinerary the many things to see and do there. The anchor will be just one of these stops, (keep an eye out for our future editions, we publish our recommendations!).

With that being said, I have to say, if you enjoy catching a sunrise, the anchor is one of the best places on the island to catch the sunrise. But in reality, anytime is a good time to visit, depending on your personal schedule. ☐

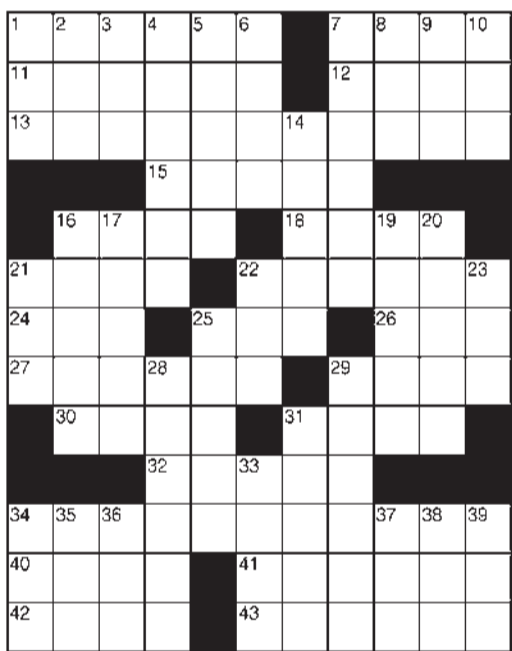


### CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH



- ACROSS**
- 2 Long time
  - 3 Chiding sound
  - 4 Talk incessantly about
  - 5 Studio sign
  - 6 Spiked club
  - 7 Whiskey holders
  - 8 With 12-Across, Brat Pack actor
  - 9 Athena's symbol
  - 10 "My word!"
  - 14 River catch
  - 16 Ready for bed
  - 17 Neigh sayer
  - 19 In the lead
  - 20 Decade divisions
  - 21 "Very funny!" online
  - 22 Gimlet base
  - 23 Wheel track
  - 25 Asian peninsula
  - 28 Hush-hush
  - 29 Free-booter
  - 31 Barista's creation
  - 33 Do a checkout chore
  - 34 Taxing org.
  - 35 Tiny taste
  - 36 Screening org.
  - 37 Mis-behaving
  - 38 Tell tales
  - 39 Finish
- DOWN**
- 1 Nautical unit
  - 7 Marsh hopper
  - 11 Large lizard
  - 12 See 8-Down
  - 13 Like some roofs and claws
  - 15 Berth places
  - 16 God with a hammer
  - 18 Sanction
  - 21 Serengeti cat
  - 22 Oil field strike
  - 24 Hockey's Bobby
  - 25 Collection in France
  - 27 Course unit
  - 29 Audition goal
  - 30 Glade grazer
  - 31 Tops
  - 32 Labor leader Chavez
  - 34 Difficult to manage
  - 40 Ascend
  - 41 Reach
  - 42 Petty fight
  - 43 Not optional
  - 1 Fragrant tree



A XYDLBAAXR  
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-7 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

LIX QTGQBWX BH D FGK LXG

KW LB NXXQ PKEKRKYDLKBM

HGBJ CXWLGVBKMO KLWXRH.

— DRAXGL PDJTW  
Cryptoquote: LET ME LIVE, LOVE,  
AND SAY IT WELL IN GOOD SENTENCES. —  
SYLVIA PLATH

## 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 tourists 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

<b>07</b> TUE	<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>08</b> WED	<b>FREEWINDS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: .....   Berth: E
<b>12</b> SUN	<b>FREEWINDS</b> Arrival: .....   Departure: 24:00   Berth: E
<b>14</b> TUE	<b>GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 8:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: B <b>ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 11:30   Departure: 23:00   Berth: C <b>CARNIVAL VISTA</b> Arrival: 13:00   Departure: 23:00   Berth: I
<b>15</b> WED	<b>ALLURE OF THE SEAS</b> Arrival: 7:00   Departure: 16:00   Berth: I <b>FREEWINDS</b> Arrival: 6:00   Departure: .....   Berth: E
<b>19</b> SUN	<b>FREEWINDS</b> Arrival: .....   Departure: 24:00   Berth: E
<b>21</b> TUE	<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

## 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

### Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

# WHO declares cruise ship hantavirus outbreak over

## Geneva, Switzerland

The World Health Organization on Thursday declared an end to the deadly hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship which sparked international alarm, after the last person left quarantine.

There were 12 confirmed and one probable case stemming from the MV Hondius, including three deaths.

But while the outbreak is now over, for scientists and experts, the work is only in its early stages, as they try to learn lessons from the episode that triggered a global health alert.

"Today, the final contact of a person exposed to hantavirus on the cruise ship MV Hondius completed their quarantine period, tested negative and returned home," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference.

"No further cases have been reported since May 25.

"We are therefore very pleased to say that WHO considers the outbreak of hantavirus over."

The Dutch-flagged ship set off April 1 from Ushuaia, Argentina, taking in remote islands in the South Atlantic Ocean, including Tristan da Cunha, before heading north to Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands, where remaining passengers were evacuated.

The polar exploration ship finally docked on May 18 in Rotterdam harbour in the Netherlands.

On May 30, the ship was cleared to put to sea again after cleaning and disinfection.

### Quest for future vaccines -

Tedros said more than 650 contacts were identified and followed up by health authorities in 33 countries and territories.

He said the WHO would continue working to understand the outbreak, and the virus itself.

"We are also coordinating a study involving 21 countries to understand how the



The Dutch Hantavirus-hit cruise ship MV Hondius arrives to dock at the port of Rotterdam on May 18, 2026.

disease develops, which will support the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines for future outbreaks," Tedros said.

Spread by rodents, hantavirus is a rare virus for which no vaccines or specific treatments exist.

The Andes species behind the Hondius outbreak is the only strain of hantavirus known to be able to jump from human to human.

It had been thought that a passenger on the ship caught the virus while travelling in regions of Argentina where it is endemic.

However the country's health ministry announced in June that an investigation in a second Argentine province had failed to find any virus-carrying rodents. Diana Rojas Alvarez, the

WHO's high impact epidemics chief said the Hondius outbreak could be declared over as it was no longer a public health risk.

"However, Andes virus and other hantaviruses are still a public health threat for South America and some other endemic areas," she said.

Experts need to keep monitoring such viruses and preparing for further spread, and involve local communities in preparedness and prevention.

"The work on hantaviruses needs to continue over time," she said.

The WHO hoped the episode might spur its member states into finally completing the missing part of the Pandemic Agreement later this month, so it may finally become operational. □

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

# Mythos and the fight over America's most powerful AI

**Washington, United States**  
After a U.S. government greenlight, global access to Anthropic's powerful AI model Fable 5 along with restricted access to the even more powerful Mythos 5 has been retored, following a standoff that strained ties between Washington and Silicon Valley.

**- What is Mythos? -**

Mythos is the name of the most advanced series of AI models made by Anthropic, the San Francisco company behind the Claude chatbot. Mythos is especially good at finding weaknesses in computer systems and at fixing them. Because that skill could be used by hackers, Anthropic did not release the full version to the public at first. Only a small group of trusted partners first in the United States only, then internationally could use it. On June 9, Anthropic released a public, safer version called Fable 5. It had safety filters built in to stop people from misusing its



This photograph shows the logo of the AI assistant "Claude Mythos" built by the U.S. artificial intelligence safety and research company Anthropic displayed on a smartphone's screen in Brussels on June 10, 2026.

hacking skills.

**- How did the export ban happen? -**

Just three days after Fable 5 launched, the government ordered Anthropic to cut off access to both Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for anyone who was not a US

citizen, even Anthropic's own foreign employees.

Since Anthropic could not easily check users' nationality, it shut down Fable 5 and Mythos 5 for everyone, everywhere.

The government said someone had found a way to "jailbreak," or trick, Fable 5

into giving dangerous information. Anthropic said the problem was minor and that other AI models could do the same thing.

**- Why the U-turn? -**

Before Mythos's arrival, the Trump administration wanted fewer rules on AI

companies, not more, hoping that would help the U.S. beat China in the AI race. But Mythos came onto the scene when Trump's relationship with Anthropic was already rocky.

In February, Anthropic, which has ties to Democrats and pushes a pro-safety stance on AI, refused to let the Pentagon use its AI without limits on surveillance and weapons.

Trump in response ordered every government agency to stop using Anthropic's products, calling the company "Leftwing nut jobs" on social media. Some observers believe the government's decision to curb the release of Mythos 5 and Fable 5 was politically motivated and connected to this earlier spat, not AI safety. Anthropic archival OpenAI, the ChatGPT-maker that enjoys smoother ties with the Trump White House, was asked to restrict the release of its own Mythos-equivalent technology, GPT-5.6 to a limited set of approved partners. □

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## India asks Meta to hold WhatsApp username rollout over fraud fears

**New Delhi, India**  
India has asked Meta to hold off launching its username feature on WhatsApp in the world's most populous country, citing concerns over fraud and impersonation, media reports said Thursday. The move comes as authorities in India grapple

with a spike in cybercrime, with scammers exploiting low digital safety awareness among millions of internet users.

WhatsApp, owned by U.S. tech giant Meta, said Monday that users worldwide would be able to connect via unique usernames instead of sharing

their phone numbers, an upcoming feature it said was designed to enhance privacy.

India, WhatsApp's largest market with more than half a billion users, voiced concerns Wednesday that the change could make it easier for fraudsters to target victims.

In a letter to Meta, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology said the feature could lead to an increase in online fraud, phishing, digital arrest scams and impersonation attacks, the Indian Express newspaper reported.

"There is a possibility that bad actors may claim usernames... and message other users while pretending to be someone they are not," the English-language daily quoted a senior government official as saying.

"For those who may not be

technologically aware to make out the difference, it could be a huge challenge."

The ministry has asked Meta not to roll out the feature until consultation on the matter is over, the paper added.

Last month, Meta appointed Indian fintech titan Kunal Shah as the new head of WhatsApp.

Meta said the feature was not yet live in India and that it had already reserved usernames for public figures and verified accounts.

"To protect against impersonation, we've held the highest-profile names... so they can only ever be claimed by their legitimate owners," it said in a statement.

"Users still require a phone number to use WhatsApp and we've built multiple layers of defense against scams into usernames." □



This illustration photograph taken on July 2, 2026 shows the new upcoming Username feature on U.S. instant messaging software WhatsApp, displayed on a smartphone with the backdrop of India's national flag in New Delhi.



Team Visma-Lease a bike's Danish rider Jonas Vingegaard celebrates on the podium with the trophy inspired by a mask of 'La Patum de Berga' traditional festival, after winning the sixth stage of the 2026 'Volta a Catalunya' cycling tour of Catalonia, a 158 km race between Berga and the Sanctuary of La Mare de Deu de Queralt in Berga, on March 28, 2026.

## Pogacar expects Vingegaard Tour de France battle to last 'years'

### Barcelona, Spain

Tour de France champion Tadej Pogacar said on Thursday that his rivalry with Jonas Vingegaard is pushing both riders "to new heights".

The pair have won the last six editions of the Tour de France between them, and have finished first and second in each of the last five -- something which had never happened before.

Slovenian Pogacar has four Tour wins to Vingegaard's two but the Dane has won all three of cycling's Grand Tours following his Giro d'Italia victory in May.

World champion Pogacar has yet to win the Vuelta a Espana, where he finished third in his only appearance in 2019.

And the 27-year-old insisted that the Tour is not going to be a straight fight between him and Vingegaard, 29, pointing to his own UEA Team Emirates team-mate Isaac del Toro as a potential challenger.

"I don't think that he's the only one that can come close," Pogacar said about Vingegaard.

"I think that there are quite a few guys here that can aim for the victory, right

next to me," he added at Thursday's pre-Tour press conference, indicating Mexican Del Toro.

"But the competition between me and Jonas, of course, the last few years was spectacular.

"And I think it will continue for a few more years, I hope. We will see.

"I think we push each other to the new heights every year. So we will see how far we go this year."

### - 'Better and stronger' -

Although Vingegaard has beaten Pogacar at the Tour twice in 2022 and 2023 the general feeling is that the Slovenian has stepped up a level since then.

He is aiming for a record-equalling fifth Tour triumph this year.

But Visma-Lease a Bike leader Vingegaard said that his preparation for the Tour has gone as well as he could have hoped for.

He has started three stage races this year, winning all three.

"Both better and stronger," he said when asked how he felt.

"I would even say more happy in a mental state also.

"I've had a very good year so far this year and I've en-

joyed riding a bit more this year than I did last year."

Success breeds confidence, particularly in Vingegaard's case.

The 12 wins he has had already this season is double the number he managed in the whole of 2025.

"On one hand, of course I had a very good season so far already with the three races I've done," he said.

"Of course it takes some pressure off me and off the team, but the Tour de France is still the biggest race.

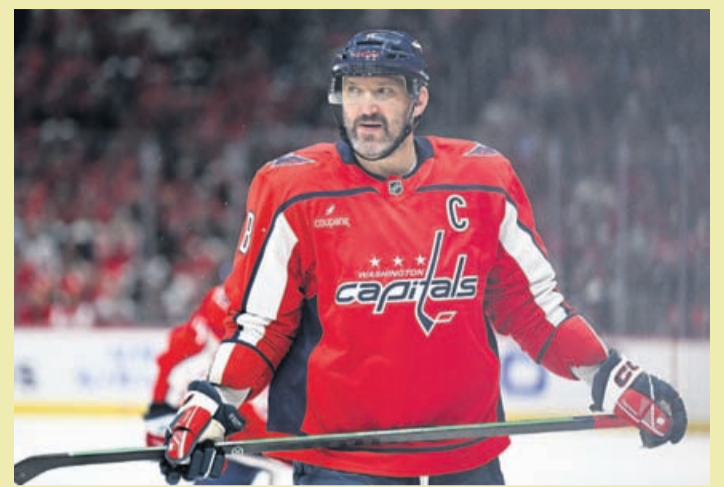
"It's still the race you really want to win."

And in that, he knows there is one man better than him, although he has the assurance that he is the only rider to have ever beaten Pogacar at the Tour.

"I still think that Tadej is probably the best rider who has ever been in a bunch," said Vingegaard.

"It's something that I'm extremely proud of (having beaten him) and also gives me motivation to try to do it again and to try to do it this year.

"To also give the confidence that I am one of the guys who can actually challenge him." □



Alex Ovechkin #8 of the Washington Capitals prepares for a face off in the second period against the Pittsburgh Penguins on April 12, 2026 at Capital One Arena in Washington, D.C.

## Ovechkin returning to Caps for 22nd NHL season

### Washington, United States

Alex Ovechkin, the NHL's all-time leading goal scorer, will return for a 22nd season with the Washington Capitals, the club announced on Thursday.

The Capitals said in a statement that the Russian great has signed a one-year contract with an average annual value of \$4.25 million.

"I'm back!" Ovechkin said in comments posted on the Caps website. "Thank you to everyone for giving me and my family the time to make this decision. I'm healthy. I love playing hockey and competing to win. I'm excited to come back and join my teammates so we can fight for a playoff spot and have a chance to win. See you in September, DC!"

Ovechkin, who turns 41 in September, was the first overall draft pick by the Capitals in 2004, arriving in the NHL in 2005 after launching his pro career with Dynamo Moscow at the age of 16.

He led the Capitals to the Stanley Cup in 2018, but last season Washington fell short of a playoff berth.

Ovechkin had said when the season ended that he would decide his future after consulting with his family, indicating that he hoped to keep playing but wanted to contend for another title.

Ovechkin led the Capitals with 32 goals last season to take his record career total to 929.

He surpassed Wayne Gretzky as the league's all-time leading goal scorer when he tallied his 895th in April of 2025.

He also ranks first in NHL history in power-play goals (331), game-winning goals (141) and overtime goals (27).

"Our entire organization is thrilled that Alex has decided to continue playing," Capitals General Manager Chris Patrick said in a statement.

"Alex has proven year after year that he can produce offensively and that he is still the driving force of our team."

Since Ovechkin said in April that contending for a Cup was a key consideration in whether he'd return, the Capitals have acquired Jordan Kyrou and Alex Tuch, who each have three 30-goal seasons in the league.

"We are excited about the additions we made this off-season to bolster our lineup and make our group more competitive," Patrick said. "We believe that our roster is well balanced and will help create more opportunities for Alex to create offense and score goals.

"In addition, his presence in our locker room especially with our young players will continue to be an enormous boost for our organization and will help shape our team culture for years to come." □



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## Superb Swiatek, Zverev cruise into Wimbledon last 32

**London, United Kingdom** Iga Swiatek put a stuttering start to her Wimbledon title defence firmly behind her by powering to a statement second-round victory over Karolina Pliskova, while Alexander Zverev also eased through on Thursday.

Reigning champion Swiatek, who struggled to hold back tears after battling past Taylor Townsend in the first round, was back to her ruthless best in a 6-1, 6-3 dismantling of former world number one Pliskova in 70 minutes.

"For sure the first round was really emotional but today I felt like it's another day at the office, I need to be ready, be sharp," said Swiatek.

The Pole, who has been inconsistent since winning her sixth Grand Slam title at the All England Club 12 months ago, will next face the Philippines' Alexandra Eala, who beat Serena Wil-

liams' first-round conqueror Maya Joint.

Pliskova, who returned to the tour this year after a long-term injury absence, was no match for the third

seed.

The 25-year-old Swiatek has reached at least the third round on each of her past 26 Grand Slam appearances since losing in

round two at the 2019 U.S. Open.

Eala, the 29th seed, became the first woman from the Philippines to reach

the third round of a Grand Slam, beating Joint 3-6, 6-2, 6-0 on a raucous Court Three.

"I think the atmosphere today was amazing, it was electric, respectful and all that I could have hoped for," said the 21-year-old.

Last year's runner-up Amanda Anisimova came back from a break down in the third set to beat Sofia Kenin in a deciding tie-break.

Former Australian Open champion Madison Keys ended home interest in the women's singles, beating Britain's Katie Swan in straight sets.

Elena Rybakina, the 2022 Wimbledon champion, stepped up her bid to take the world-number-one ranking from Aryna Sabalenka next week with a ruthless 6-1, 6-2 rout of American Caty McNally. Rybakina meets Belgian 25th seed Elise Mertens for a place in the last 16. □



**Poland's Iga Swiatek returns to Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova during their women's singles second round tennis match on the fourth day of the 2026 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club in Wimbledon, southwest London, on July 2, 2026.**