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U.S. announces civilian nuclear deal with Saudi Arabia

Washington, United States

The United States on Wednesday announced a landmark deal with Saudi Arabia that would establish a civilian nuclear program in the Gulf country, with Washington insisting the agreement includes safeguards against non-proliferation.

The move comes as the United States under President Donald Trump fights a war with Iran that began in large part over concerns with Tehran's nuclear program -- an issue that remains a key point of contention during now-stalled peace talks.

Two agreements -- one on "peaceful nuclear cooperation" and another on "bilateral safeguards" -- were signed by U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright and his Saudi counterpart Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman, the US Energy Department said.

The text of the deals were not immediately made public.

"Together, these two agreements lay the legal foundation for a decades-long, multi-billion-dollar partnership that advances several priority economic and strategic objectives, including nuclear nonproliferation," the department said in a statement.

A provision in the deal would potentially see U.S. companies build a uranium enrichment facility in Saudi



U.S. Secretary of Energy Chris Wright (C-L) and Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman (C-R) exchange folders as US President Donald Trump (L) and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (R) look on during a bilateral meeting in Riyadh on May 13, 2025.

Arabia, the Wall Street Journal reported. The Energy Department statement made no mention of such a provision and did not offer comment when asked about it by AFP.

The deal will be submitted to Congress for review, but the Republican-controlled legislature is unlikely to block its implementation. U.S. lawmakers from both parties and Israeli officials have previously voiced opposition to such a project over fears Saudi Arabia could eventually convert it to develop nuclear weapons.

Saudi Arabia, like Tehran, has long been adamant about its right to pursue a

civilian nuclear program. Last year it signed a mutual defense pact with nuclear-armed Pakistan.

Washington has sought in recent years to include any deal concerning a nuclear agreement in a wider strategic play that would see Saudi Arabia normalize ties with Israel, along with the signing of a US-Saudi defense pact.

- Proliferation concerns -

The United States signed a nuclear agreement with the kingdom's neighbor the United Arab Emirates in 2009, although the country does not enrich its own uranium.

A drone struck a genera-

tor in May near the UAE's Barakah nuclear plant, the Arab world's only such facility, causing a fire.

Policymakers have long feared that if Iran produced a nuclear weapon, the move would set off an arms race across the Gulf. US Energy Secretary Wright dismissed concerns about proliferation, insisting the deal was in Washington's economic and strategic interest.

"Rest assured, these agreements uphold the highest standards of nuclear safety and nonproliferation, while relying on the world's best nuclear technology and scientists, designed right here in the United States,"

he said in a statement.

The U.S.-Saudi deal was signed under Section 123 of the U.S. Atomic Energy Act. The United States has agreements governing nuclear cooperation with more than 50 countries, although the extent varies by each deal.

Experts said such a deal had been in the works for a considerable period, but some raised concerns about the potential for enrichment on Saudi soil.

"It would be a mistake to allow Saudi Arabia the capability for enrichment," said Matthew Kroenig of the Atlantic Council in comments made before the deal was formally announced.

"Washington is right to strengthen its relationship with Riyadh, but it should not do so at the expense of its effective nuclear weapons nonproliferation standards."

Jennifer T. Gordon, director of the Atlantic Council's Nuclear Energy Policy Initiative, lauded the agreement as a "win for the United States over Russia and China."

"Saudi Arabia has made it clear that it will purchase nuclear energy technologies and begin a civil nuclear program; the only question has been whether the kingdom would choose to work with the US and its allies, or whether it would turn to Russia or China," she said. □



U.S. Speaker of the House Mike Johnson (R-LA) arrives to speak to the press in the U.S. Capitol on July 22, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Washington, United States

The U.S. House of Representatives approved a \$95 billion budget framework on Wednesday, with most of

the funding earmarked for the Pentagon to fund the war against Iran.

The measure was narrowly approved in a 216-214 vote

U.S. House approves \$95B budget plan with Iran war funding

and now heads to the Senate, where its fate is uncertain.

The plan provides \$73 billion for the armed forces and intelligence agencies, notably to fund operations linked to the war against Iran, as well as \$12 billion in aid for farmers affected by President Donald Trump's trade war.

An additional \$10 billion would go toward election-related programs as part of Trump's push to enact new nationwide voting restrictions while his broader "SAVE

America Act" lacks enough support to proceed.

The budget package represents the party's last major legislative push before November's midterm elections, the outcome of which will determine whether the party retains its majority in Congress and thus continues to shape the remainder of Trump's second term.

The resolution, which for now is only a budget framework, would allow House Republicans -- if it is approved by the Senate -- to draft detailed

legislation later in the summer.

The aim would then be to try to pass it in the Senate by a simple majority using an expedited budget procedure, thereby bypassing the usual 60-vote threshold and Democratic opposition. House Speaker Mike Johnson said the measure approved Wednesday "puts Congressional Republicans on a path to enacting two fundamentally simple and crucial goals: securing American elections and strengthening our homeland." □

U.S. trial of Venezuela's Maduro set for June 2027

New York, United States

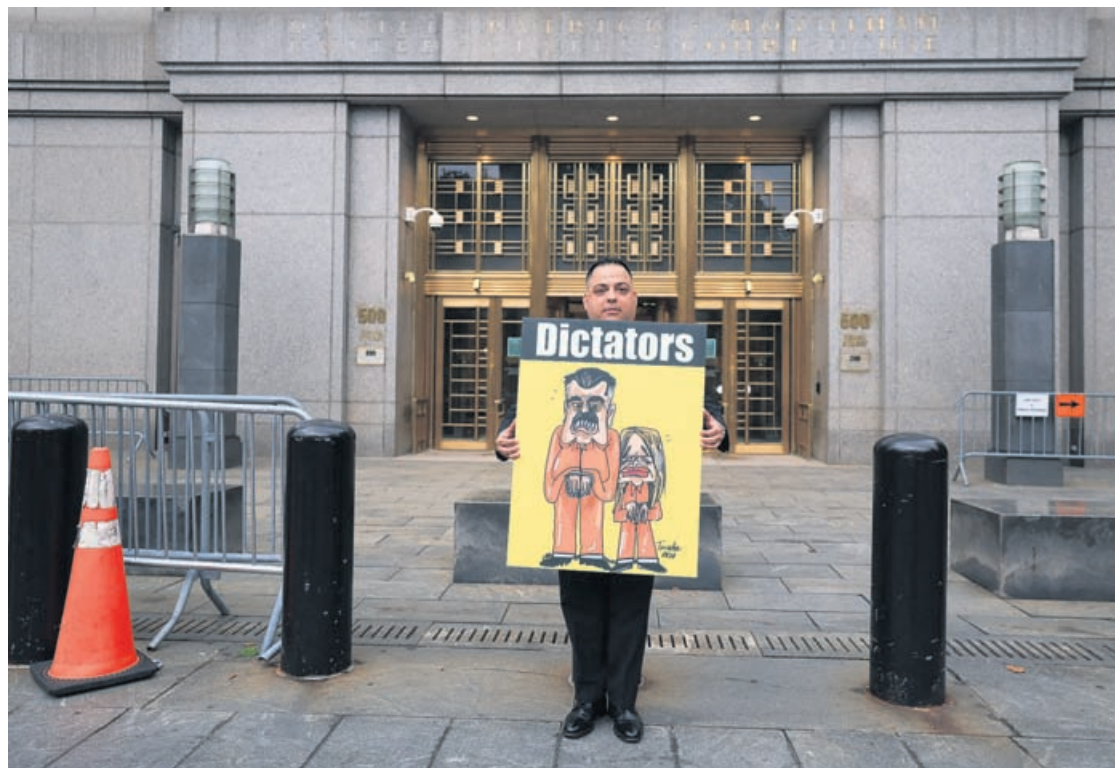
Venezuela's ousted president Nicolas Maduro and his wife will go on trial in the United States in June 2027, a court ruled Wednesday, after the US military captured them in a stunning nighttime raid in January. The former leader, 63, and wife Cilia Flores have been held in a Brooklyn jail for more than seven months after pleading not guilty to federal drug trafficking and firearms charges.

American commandos snatched the pair from their compound in Caracas on January 3. The lightning operation combined naval, air and ground forces, deposing the strongman who had led Venezuela since 2013.

During a roughly 20-minute hearing, Judge Alvin Hellerstein set the trial date for June 1 next year following a joint request from prosecutors and defense counsel.

Maduro, dressed in a beige prison uniform and wearing glasses, did not speak during his third US court appearance other than to say hello to the court as he entered.

Flores, wearing the same outfit with her blonde hair



A demonstrator holds a sign featuring an illustration of ousted Venezuelan president Nicolas Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, outside the Daniel Patrick Moynihan Federal Courthouse in New York City on July 22, 2026.

tied back, sat a few feet from him with the couple flanked by their lawyers. Protesters with signs reading "Free President Maduro" gathered outside the Manhattan courthouse waving Venezuelan flags, while opposing demonstrators held placards calling Maduro and Flores "dictators." Judge Hellerstein also on Wednesday set a November 17 hearing devoted to defense motions, including

a challenge to the legality of how Maduro and Flores were captured. Maduro himself has said he was "kidnapped" and described himself as a "prisoner of war" back in January. Since Maduro's capture, Venezuela has been led by his former vice president Delcy Rodriguez, while the United States effectively controls the country's oil exports, with proceeds going into special accounts

overseen by Washington.

- Legal battles -

U.S. prosecutors allege that Maduro used state power to protect and promote illegal drug smuggling, and that he allied himself with cartels to ship tons of cocaine into the United States. Maduro has denied the four counts he faces: "narco-terrorism" conspiracy, cocaine importation con-

spiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices as well as conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices.

Flores has similarly pleaded not guilty to the three counts she faces: cocaine importation conspiracy, possession of machine guns and destructive devices and conspiracy to possess machine guns and destructive devices.

The United States in April allowed Venezuela to pay for Maduro's and Flores's legal defense, something previously barred by US sanctions.

The couple had sought to have their cases dismissed on grounds that blocking the funding violated the U.S. Constitution's right to counsel of one's choice.

Maduro also faces a civil case in the United States after the families of five young men slain in Venezuela alleged that he ordered the extrajudicial killings as part of a wider pattern of state violence.

The complaint filed last month states that Maduro had an elite security force called Special Action Forces, or FAES, execute the men between 2017 and 2020. □

U.S. teen withdraws lawsuit against Meta over social media addiction

Los Angeles, United States

A U.S. teenager has withdrawn his lawsuit against Meta, his lawyers announced Wednesday, closing out a closely watched case over social media's harms to children's mental health without a trial.

The withdrawal ends the case days before it was due to go before a Los Angeles jury on July 27 a trial that would have made Meta the sole defendant after YouTube, TikTok and Snap reached confidential settlements.

The plaintiff, identified by his initials R.K.C., is a teenager from Florida who claims compulsive social media use contributed to

anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts for which he continues to receive treatment.

His case was selected as a bellwether to help resolve thousands of similar lawsuits across the country. A first bellwether trial concluded in March, when a Los Angeles jury ordered Meta and Google to pay a 20-year-old woman, K.G.M., \$6 million a historic first.

"R.K.C. came into this process wanting to hold social media companies accountable and push for changes to protect young people like himself. He did that," attorneys Emily Jeffcott and Rahul Ravipudi said in a joint statement.

"In light of the overall successful result of the litigation and his concerns about enduring a grueling weeks-long trial, he has elected to withdraw his claims against Meta," they added.

"He's ready to close this chapter and focus on his recovery and engage in therapy as he aspires to have a normal life."

A Meta spokesperson said in a statement: "Days after settling with other social media companies, the plaintiff dropped his case against Meta, the only remaining defendant, without receiving any payment."

"The claims never held up, and this outcome makes clear that we will not back



Relatives of victims, including Lori Schott (R) and Amy Neville (L), walk out of the Los Angeles Superior Court holding portraits of their children in Los Angeles, on March 25, 2026.

away from defending ourselves against baseless lawsuits."

YouTube reached a confidential settlement with R.K.C. in June, with TikTok and Snap following with their own settlements on July 1 and July 20 respectively.

Meta is facing a legal on-

slaught over accusations that its products are addictive and cause harm to young people.

Another case in New Mexico found Meta liable for misleading consumers about the safety risks its platforms pose to children. The jury ordered Meta to pay \$375 million in damages. □



(L-R) Ted Sarandos, Sarah Sarandos and Dan Lin attend Netflix's "72 Hours" New York Special Screening afterparty at Nebula on July 20, 2026 in New York City.

A once wary Hollywood slowly warms to AI

New York, United States

Once wary of artificial intelligence, Hollywood is now striking up partnerships with AI start-ups and weaving the technology into productions more and more openly all while insisting the creative process itself will remain untouched. "Everybody is still wrapping their head around it," said Mike Mosallam, COO of production company Shadowbox Studios, in an interview with Variety as recently 2025.

Rattled by the technology, Hollywood initially went on the defensive.

Studios worried about their intellectual property being misused, and actors feared becoming little more than raw material for AI systems and made it a central plank of their strike action in 2023.

Those who did experiment ran into the technology's early limitations six-fingered hands, mouths that didn't move right.

But a floodgate opened in early March, when Netflix bought a small, little-known company fewer than 20 employees for a hefty \$587 million.

Co-founded in 2022 by producer, director and actor Ben Affleck, InterPositive is an AI platform designed to assist film and TV production.

In early June, studio Lionsgate took a stake in Runway, one of the leading names in AI-generated video, and the two will now develop creative projects together.

Days later, Google made a similar move, investing in independent studio A24. Recent ad campaigns and short films have shown that AI video even when it includes human characters has crossed a real threshold.

As Runway put it in May: "In many cases, if the story is strong enough, the technology is now good enough to become invisible."

According to Jamie Umpherson, Runway's chief creative officer, people are learning to use the tools better as the technology improves on a "scale that was unimaginable a couple of years ago."

"There's more familiarity than there was even a year ago," he said, adding that this is freeing up creative teams to focus more on story and style.

Netflix co-CEO Ted Sarandos struck a similar note when presenting the company's results in mid-July: "We're making higher quality output more quickly and efficiently than we could have using traditional methods."

He said GenAI workflows have now been used on

roughly 300 Netflix titles, mostly in post-production, adding: "We're leveraging GenAI for really complicated shots and sequences."

- 'Hybrid' -

Still, the streaming giant seems to be focusing mainly on the edges of production from visualizing a concept early on to color-grading footage after filming wraps.

Independent director and producer Jon Erwin insists the core of the craft isn't going anywhere.

"Actors drive all the performances, and we use these tools to amplify the sets and the scope of the shows," he said.

"But we preserve the core of the filmmaking process, which is the relationship between the actor, the director and the camera. These tools do not replace that." In April, his production company Wonder Project launched a joint venture called Innovative Dreams with Luma, a rival to Runway.

Together they have developed a new process that lets actors be filmed naturally no green screen, no motion-capture suit and then surrounds them with a hyper-realistic AI-generated world.

Erwin calls it "hybrid" or "nonlinear" filmmaking. □



Josh Greenbaum attends the premiere of Apple TV+'s "The Dink" at AMC Century City 15 on July 20, 2026 in Los Angeles, California.

'The Dink' sees comedy in U.S. pickleball craze

Los Angeles, United States

When filmmaker Josh Greenbaum first ventured onto a pickleball court, he found an accessible pastime that could quickly turn intense, generating not just sweat but a range of emotions in minutes.

His conclusion: pickleball had all the right ingredients for comedy.

Greenbaum drew on that observation to direct "The Dink," an Apple TV film premiering this Friday on the streaming platform.

"I think part of what's so funny about it is, you know, how quickly something that starts very (much) as casual fun can become deeply competitive and also weirdly emotional," the 47-year-old director told AFP in an interview.

"The Dink" brings together Dusty (Jake Johnson) -- a former tennis prodigy who spends his time reminiscing about past glories, much to the chagrin of his father (Ed Harris) and Candace (Mary Steenburgen), a divorcee who has developed a passion for pickleball in this new phase of her life.

The film, which features realtime former tennis ace Andy Roddick, is about reinvention, ego, friendship, "and trying to find purpose," Greenbaum said.

"You have these kind of two lost souls, obviously of different generations, who are trying to figure out who they are and redefine themselves, and they help one another to do so," he said.

The movie, written by Sean Clements and produced by Hollywood staple Ben Stiller, also touches on intergenerational conflict.

"Maybe in this version, tennis represents sort of the way things have been done, and pickleball is representing a new way," said Greenbaum, who directed "Will & Harper," a 2024 documentary chronicling a cross-country road trip by two old friends.

At the heart of "The Dink" is pickleball, a sport played with small rackets and perforated plastic balls that is all the rage in the United States, where schoolkids, seniors and A-list Hollywood celebrities are on board.

The movie takes its name from the controlled dink shot that pickleball players deftly arc over the net.

The "unique" relationship between tennis and pickleball was fertile ground, the director said.

"There's a contentiousness between the two sports at the moment, and I think a lot of it's driven by the fact that they're fighting over limited resources," said Greenbaum, who was trounced in his first pickleball game by opponents in their sixties. □

India's domestic workers go online as instant services boom

New Delhi, India

JRacing against a stopwatch, a group of women folds bedsheets as they train to join an Indian start-up that offers instant home services, transforming a traditionally word-of-mouth sector and promising better pay.

Households in India have long relied on an informal army of domestic workers to mop floors, wash dishes and cook meals.

A growing crop of tech startups is now attempting to bring structure to the unregulated sector that employs some 30 million people, while allowing both workers and customers more flexibility.

Platforms such as Snabbbit, Pronto and Urban Company function much like ride-hailing apps: workers receive bookings online, travel to assigned homes and clock in on their phones. Performance is tracked through ratings, with incentives and penalties generated by algorithms.

At one of Snabbbit's training hubs in the southern tech hub of Bengaluru, workers rehearse tasks such as chopping vegetables against the clock.

For Heena Bibi, 34, "doing the same work with a company is good", making around 45,000 rupees (\$472) a month three times



This photograph taken on June 22, 2026 shows an employee of the on-demand home-services platform Snabbbit, cooking at the company's training centre in Bengaluru.

what workers typically earn with up to four customers through traditional arrangements.

"I get three-four jobs on a normal day. If there's any festival... more work comes," said the mother of four.

Domestic work in India has long been associated with low wages and concerns over abuse or exploitation. But with few barriers to entry, the sector still attracts many workers who migrate from rural areas to cities in search of opportunity, often juggling jobs across several households in a day.

- 60,000 jobs a day -

Not everyone is ready to join the app bandwagon just yet.

For Renu Devi, a 38-year-old helper from Uttar Pradesh, the traditional system feels safer.

"I am scared that I might have to go to a house where I don't know if I will be safe," she said. "At the moment, I know the people who I work for and I can trust them."

Labour advocates question whether app-based work meaningfully improves workers' conditions.

Sanjay Gaba, president of the All India Gig and Platform Workers Union, said the system simply replaces one form of exploitation with another.

"The app system is 100 per cent unfair," he told AFP. "They don't have any job security. They don't have benefits like pension because they are not permanent employees."

Aayush Agarwal, founder and chief executive of Snabbbit, said flexible hours were key to the platform's popularity among workers. "Today a mother can send her kid off to school, work at

Snabbbit for four hours and come back before the kid comes back from school," he told AFP.

"It is an opportunity that these women see in a very positive light."

Snabbbit operates across 10 cities, including Delhi and Mumbai, with 20,000 registered workers clocking an average of 60,000 jobs daily.

- No 'fixed schedule' -

Homemaker Atiya Khusro, 63, said she preferred booking helps online.

"With regular helps, there is a fixed schedule and I have to adjust my routine around their availability," she told AFP.

"With instant helps there is no such issue."

The model is becoming increasingly common across India's booming gig economy.

Pronto advertises hourly services ranging from window cleaning to "after-party express clean-ups", while Urban Company offers everything from repairs to salon treatments at the touch of a button.

Before joining the platforms, workers undergo background checks, including police verification. As part of soft skills training, they are taught how to tie their hair neatly and greet customers. □

Fishing for profit at Yangon's bustling markets

Yangon, Myanmar

At dawn, the fish markets of Yangon are a chaotic hive of activity as workers sort through vast piles of fresh supplies heaped along the banks of the Hlaing river. Clad in protective rubber gloves and boots, they wade through melted ice to unload fish and seafood at Shwe Padauk Fish Market, home to almost 500 vendors.

The facility and the older San Pya Fish Market are integral links in the Yangon food chain, transit points for protein that feeds millions of people across the city.

About 400,000 viss a traditional unit of weight in

Myanmar equivalent to more than 650,000 kilograms (1.43 million pounds) of freshwater products pass through Shwe Padauk market daily, the government said in May, and it also handles marine goods.

But like everywhere in Myanmar, the markets cannot escape the country's five-year-old civil war. The work is physically grueling, and vast numbers of young men have left Myanmar in recent years to seek work abroad and avoid the conscription introduced to bolster the military, which ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government in 2021.

Fighting in the western state of Rakhine, formerly a huge supplier of seafood, has also hit business, according to workers.

"For about five months, business hasn't been good," one supervisor said. "Many of the workers have gone to Malaysia to work abroad."

Saltwater supplies now come mainly from the Irrawaddy Delta, southwest of Yangon, they said.

And the Iran war increased the cost of fuel across the world, driving up the price of fish and impacting demand.

"My income has dropped

this year. It is not like the past few years," said a 40-year-old seafood dealer from Shwe Padauk Fish Market, speaking anonymously for security reasons.

"Commodity prices have gone up and sales have also dropped among the vendors," he told AFP. □



Workers sort through octopus for sale at the Shwe Padauk fish market in Yangon on July 8, 2026.



A view of the almost completely uninhabited and abandoned settlement of Zaozernyy in northern Kazakhstan on May 28, 2026.

In Kazakhstan, emptying villages and overcrowded cities

Zaozerny, Kazakhstan

In a slowly emptying village in northern Kazakhstan, wild grass engulfed the entrances of abandoned apartment blocks, as children's songs spilled into the street from the only building still occupied.

Zaozerny is one of hundreds of villages in the Central Asian country that has seen almost its entire population leave many never to return as opportunities dry up and young people head to the ever-expanding cities.

"It's calm and peaceful here, I can always keep an eye on the children," said Yulia Sadvakasova, a 33-year-old schoolteacher and mother of two.

Around the village is the vast Kazakh steppe, stretching seemingly endlessly into a horizon broken only by the solitary tower of a cement plant.

A poster hung outside the school for upcoming municipal elections a rare reminder that life, for those who remain, has not frozen in time.

At the fall of the Soviet Union, the town had around 10,000 residents, supported by employment in a nearby uranium mine. And now? Just 216.

Cows walk the floor of what used to be a city theatre. The former hospital is a heap of rubble and the

uranium miner glorified on a huge Soviet mosaic has lost half his face.

To reach the nearest city, Sadvakasova must drive two hours along a neglected road that becomes almost impassable in rain or snow.

"Everything is badly broken up. Whenever we can, we go somewhere, even though it's difficult," she told AFP.

- Cities under pressure -

Vast Kazakhstan, the ninth-largest country in the world, stretches some 1,600 kilometers (994 miles) north-to-south and 3,000 kilometers west-to-east.

And with around 20 million residents, it is one of the world's least densely populated.

Officials say some 1,800 localities have already vanished since the turn of the century ghost villages that have become nothing more than decaying buildings and a name on a map. The majority are in the north, where 1.2 million people have left since the Soviet collapse in 1991.

The exodus and the ageing of the ethnic Slavic population many descendants of people forcibly resettled there in the Soviet era and the lack of economic prospects are all driving the internal migration.

Around 25-30 percent of the Kazakh population live in just three cities: the capital Astana in the centre, and the southern metropolises of Almaty and Shymkent.

"People are moving en masse to Astana and Almaty," President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said in June citing a lack of "social facilities" in the regions. The influx is heaping "colossal pressure" on the cities, he warned in separate comments last year.

In Astana, schools are overloaded, and heating and water supply systems are struggling to cope, he said.

- 'Dynamism' -

Schoolteacher Anara Batalova moved to the capital from a Soviet-era apartment block in a small polluted industrial town in search of "dynamism".

"Astana pulled me in with its lights, young people, movement, new organizations, events, exhibitions," she told AFP.

"All our friends and neighbors have come from different towns and villages," she said.

Her suburban community of Kosshy, some 20 kilometers (12 miles) from central Astana, has exploded over the last 25 years growing from barely 2,000 inhabitants to 80,000. □



People take a dip at a beach in the southern city of Tyre as a damaged building is visible in the background on July 12, 2026.

Ancient Lebanese city of Tyre added to heritage danger list

Paris, France

Tyre, an ancient Phoenician city in southern Lebanon hit in recent months by Israeli bombardment, was on Wednesday added to the UNESCO list of world heritage sites in danger.

"The site has been directly hit and has sustained damage. Furthermore, its state of conservation is a cause for growing concern, particularly given the possibility of further impacts," the organisation said.

"Optimal conditions are no longer in place to ensure the conservation and protection of the property's outstanding universal value," said the UN body, adding that it was the Lebanese government that requested its inclusion on the list.

The ruins in Tyre, around 80 kilometres (50 miles) south of Beirut but barely 20 kilometres from the Israeli border, were placed on the UNESCO heritage list in 1984 and contain mainly Roman-era archaeological remains.

The coastal city was caught up in recent months in the conflict between Israel and Hezbollah, and tens of thousands of its residents fled after the Israeli army issued evacuation orders covering districts including some archaeological areas, though most locals have have since returned.

Lebanese Culture Minister Ghassan Salame welcomed Wednesday's move and said the listing would "focus the attention and concern of UNESCO and member states on a site of great importance in the history of a region currently witnessing conflicts".

Hezbollah drew Lebanon into the Middle East conflict when it fired rockets at Israel to avenge the US-Israeli killing of Iran's supreme leader.

Israel responded with heavy strikes and a ground invasion, killing more than 4,300 people.

The ancient city, founded some 4,700 years ago, is home to two protected areas listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and which include a Roman triumphal arch and a hippodrome dating from the second century.

One of the sites suffered a direct hit from an Israeli strike in June.

A Lebanese culture ministry official told AFP at the time that an administrative office was struck and debris from nearby bombardment had impacted archaeological elements including columns, capitals and mosaics.

The city, one of the oldest in the Mediterranean, was variously Phoenician, Persian, Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine. □

Basic driving rules on Aruba: Roundabouts

(Oranjestad)—Have you ever felt confused when you're driving on the highways or backstreets of Aruba? Then we present a simple guide to some of the basic rules of Aruban traffic, along with some tips for things to look out for.

Speed limit

Legally, the speed limit on the four-lane highways is 80 km/h. This speed limit also counts for the main roads that are connected to the highways. The minimum speed is 50 km/h. Most people drive around 60 km/h on the main roads and about 70 km/h on the highways. There are also areas that indicate a speed limit on a sign; these are usually around populated and school areas.

The four-lane highways contain the left-lane, also known as the "fast" lane for each direction. Here is where vehicles can drive up to the maximum speed. However, legally it is not permitted to drive for long periods of time on the left lane. This lane is primarily designed for drivers to switch lanes before a roundabout, for example, if your exit on the roundabout is on your far left. The general lane to drive in—both at maximum and minimum speed—is on the right lane.

Roundabouts

Speaking of roundabouts, it is important to know where you have to enter and drive on the roundabout to make your exit. A good rule of thumb is to count the exits starting from your right side. So, exit 1 would be on your right; exit 2 would be straight ahead; exit 3 would be on your far left and exit 4 would lead to the road paralleled to the one you're on, heading in



the other direction.

Most roundabouts have these 4 exits, so they are relatively simple. When you're driving on the four-lane highway, it is important to know when to switch to the left lane to make your exit; if your exit is on your far left (exit 3), then you need to switch to the left lane on the high way before nearing the roundabout so you can take the path that leads you directly to your exit. If your exit is on your right or if you're going straight ahead, you can keep driving in the right lane of the highway.

It's also important to know that vehicles about to enter the roundabout must yield to those already on it. A good rule of thumb is to look out if someone is coming from your left side.

However, other roundabouts can

be quite tricky to navigate...

Watty Vos Boulevard (the "paperclip" roundabout)

Probably the biggest roundabout on the island, the "paperclip" roundabout on the Watty Vos Boulevard is one of the trickier roundabouts that could—and has—caused confusion among both tourists and locals. However, once you take a good look at it, it's fairly simple. The basis is just the same as a regular roundabout (left exit? left lane! etc.), but instead of having four different exits like on a regular roundabout, now you have two extra; one on the right and the other on the left side of the roundabout. The rules don't change at all, you just have to keep an extra eye open.

Airport roundabout

Ah, yes. The infamous airport roundabout. The favorite round-

about amongst local, because of its easy (hard) lanes that never (always) cause confusion among drivers. Sarcasm aside, this roundabout can be tricky to enter, especially when you're driving from the direction of the airport heading. When you're driving away from the airport reaching the roundabout, you'll be faced with three lanes. The far right lane is to take the exit 1 out heading east (right lane of highway). The middle exit is used for exit 1 (left lane of highway), 2 and 3. The far left exit is used to only exit on exit 3 (left lane of highway) and 4.

"Las Americas" roundabout

The Las Americas roundabout is located farther west from the airport roundabout. This roundabout may look like a regular roundabout—and for the most part, it is. However, when you are driving from the east going in the direction of town, please take note that there are two exits on your right.

When you're driving towards this roundabout, you'll notice that the road becomes wider, splitting into two lanes. The right lane is used to take the first and second exit on the right. If you want to exit straight ahead, you must drive on the left lane!

It's always scary to drive in new places where the traffic may look and work differently, but once you get it right once, you'll get the hang of it in no time. Additionally, all roundabouts and roads on Aruba have signs and arrows painted on the road to help guide you. So take your time, keep your eyes open and don't forget to wear a seat belt! □



BELGIAN BISTRO

L'AVENUE

- ARUBA -

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Don't miss out on L'Avenue's Early Bird Special!

(Oranjestad)—Up to grab an early dinner after a day of shopping or cruising? Take advantage of L'Avenue's Early Bird Special, and experience their innovative twist of traditional Belgian cuisine!

Located in a cozy nook at The Cove Mall—a short walking distance from the Holiday Inn and Paseo Herencia, this Belgian and French bistro offers a delicious and rich menu available through lunch and dinner from 11am to 10pm. Enjoy your lunch and/or dinner in a cool, air-conditioned interior area of the restaurant, accompanied by the warm lights and chic design that emphasizes the restaurant's laid-back, yet sophisticated ambience.

Lunch includes a variety of sandwiches—with a healthy selection of bread options—if you're going for a light meal, but just like their dinner selection, also includes steak, chicken, fish, and even mussels and rabbit if you're craving a bit more of L'Avenue's exquisite menu. And let's not forget their wide selection of Belgian beer and European wine to complete the tasty experience!

But that's not all! L'Avenue is offering their guests their Early Bird Special, available every day from 4pm to 7pm. Enjoy this affordable and delectable 3-course meal special at a comfortable price of \$32 per

guest, including a glass of house wine.

L'Avenue honors and takes pride in serving the traditional Belgian and French flavors, but does not shy away from offering a flexible menu for their guests' needs. That's right, L'Avenue also offers to cater for their guests' dietary restrictions, making sure that each guest gets well taken care of!

More information

L'Avenue is situated at The Cove Mall in Palm Beach and is open every day from 11am to 10pm for lunch and dinner. To book a reservation or ask for more information, please contact their phone line at **+297 6996400**, send an e-mail **info@lavenuearuba.com**, or visit their website at **lavenuearuba.com** □



Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill

(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the

Arikok National Park.

The staircase that run on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the government decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stair for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see.

The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day. □



Visit the island's popular cave sites!

(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadirikiri cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an "off-road" tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves.

Quadirikiri Cave
Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

Woman in Quadirikiri Cave, Arikok National Park, Aruba
As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel



of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have

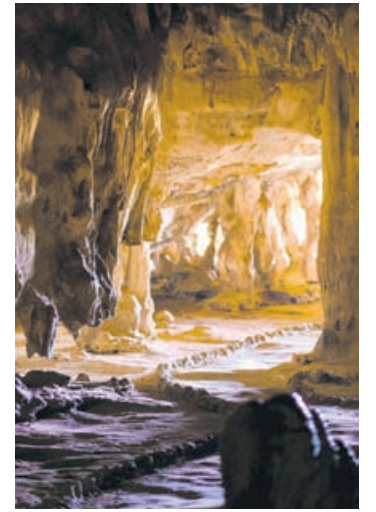
been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the

biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is inter-



esting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy. Take care to not disturb the bats' habitat. □



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Fun facts about the 'Lisinbein'

The 'Lisinbein' (*Scolopendra gigantea*), also known as the Giant Centipede, is one of the largest centipedes in the world and is found in Aruba. Its size and hunting prowess make it a fascinating, if often misunderstood, creature.

Despite its fearsome reputation, it plays a crucial ecological role that often goes unnoticed.

As an apex invertebrate predator, *Scolopendra gigantea* helps maintain balance in the ecosystem. Moreover, they themselves are a food source for birds such as the Crested Caracara (Warawara) and the Aruba burrowing owl (Shoco).

It controls populations of smaller invertebrates and even small vertebrates, ensuring that no species overpopulates, which could disrupt local biodiversity.

Its presence can indicate a healthy, functioning ecosystem. Its sensitivity to environmental changes makes it a bioindicator of ecological balance.

It can reach an impressive length of up to 30 centimeters (approx. 12 inches) and live for around 5 to 10 years in the wild. Its size and longevity makes it a significant and long-term part of the ecosystem.

A mother's love

In *Scolopendra* species, the 'mother'

typically exhibits maternal care by curling around her eggs and newly hatched young. She stays coiled around the clutch, protecting it from predators and fungi, which are serious risks in the moist environments these centipedes often inhabit. The mother maintains a clean environment for the eggs by carefully grooming them, which helps prevent fungal growth that could endanger the brood. This behavior may continue until the young centipedes have undergone their first molt, making them more capable of independent survival.

This form of parental care is beneficial in increasing the survival rates of offspring, as the mother's protection provides a safe 'environment' during their vulnerable developmental stages. It's a fascinating adaptation because it shows a form of care that resembles more complex behaviors observed in vertebrates.

No bark, but all bite!

The lisinbein is known locally for having a really painful sting. While venomous, the Lisinbein is generally not aggressive toward humans unless provoked. Its role as a guardian of balance in the ecosystem helps protect the natural beauty of Aruba by keeping the ecosystem in harmony.

Editor's note: Information and pictures provided by Ms. Natasha Silva from the Aruba Conservation Foundation. □

Meet an Aruban trailblazers: Padu Lampe

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



On April 26th, 1920, Juan Chabaya Lampe "Padu Lampe/Padu del Caribe" was born in Nassastraat, Oranjestad. He grew up in a happy musical environment, and it is because of this that he developed a love for music. Starting from the age of 12, he was agile in the clarinet, mandolin and cuatro. Henry Lampe, his father, was also a well-known pianist and musician. In a publication of the informative seminar, "Observer", from august 1st, 1962, Padu's many merits and friendly personality stood out. It was said that he was an excellent pianist with a

personal style and full of surprises. Secondly, though the composer was not too familiar with music theory, he showed innovations in his compositions. Lastly, Padu was a promoter of Creole music around the world. One of the most important moments in Aruban history, in which he was able to witness first-hand, was the first radio broadcast on the island on March 20th, 1954. Here, he was accompanied by Antillean guitarist Julian Coco and Hubert "Loi" Booi. In the art world, Padu was also a known painter. Dur-

ing his youth, he made several painting using his unique style. In 1939, he participated in an art exhibit in New York, where he won a bronze medal for his painting "Typical View of Aruba." Padu remained a popular artist within the Dutch Antilles and the Caribbean as a pianist, singer, author and painter. Padu Lampe was a local artist who became renowned in Venezuela, Colombia, The U.S. and The Netherlands too. In the 1950s, he sold no less than 50 thousand copies of his long-playing albums (LPs). Padu Lampe was a multi-faceted artist, inspired by his interest in parapsychology and supernatural phenomenon. He wrote three books in Papiamentu on the subject in 1986, which was published by the Aruban National Printing Press with sponsorship provided by the Prince Bernhard Funds Netherlands Antilles. Besides that, Padu passed his exam on "Society to Advanced Ethical Hypnosis"



in 1964 in New Jersey. He received a certificate as a hypnotechnician, which gave him the authority to practice hypnosis in some states. Over the course of his career, he received many accolades and awards in Aruba, Curacao, Venezuela and the Netherlands. Padu del Caribe passed away on November 29th, 2019, at the age of 99 years old. Padu brought the Aruban culture around the world. His legacy will remain ingrained in the Aruban cultural history, and he will be known forever as one of the most influential trailblazers of our community. Padu will always be in Aru-

ba's heart, because he had composed various special songs dedicated to the mothers of the island; his song "Sonrisa di un baby" ("A baby's Smile") has been written in three different languages. Padu also wrote our national anthem "Aruba Dushi Tera", along with Mr. Rufo Wever. This song was approved by the government of Aruba and was named the official anthem of the island in 1976. Other songs that have been considered as being almost a second anthem for Arubans is the special composition he wrote for his wife Daisy Croes called "Abo so". Daisy later passed away in 1994. □

The Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and its history

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

Built in 1872 by English company Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd, the gold mill at Bushiribana was constructed in the area where most gold was found by locals. The story of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when a first exploration for gold on the island was commis-

sioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some gold, it was enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young boy found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started search-



ing for more gold. About 25 pounds worth was found.

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

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

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

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

Sources: Etnia Nativa

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Candelchi!

ORANJESTAD—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Candelchi" (Squirrelfish), a common, yet shy fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, known as Santa Rosa, offers this informative article that illustrates some fish and their names in Papiamentu.

Candelchi, Squirrelfish, *Holocentrus adscensionis*:

Candelchi actually refers to the entire squirrelfish family or, as some say, when we say candelchi, we mean several different species but without distinguishing them by species. In this picture, we are showing



the most common one in our waters, which is called squirrelfish in English or scientifically known as *Holocentrus adscensionis*.

Under candelchi, we in Aru-

ba generally refer to all the different species of squirrelfish. They all look alike and it's really difficult to distinguish between them.

The squirrelfish family is dis-

tinguished by the following characteristics. They are heart-shaped with pink or red hues and often show heart-shaped streaks between the scales along the body. They have hard

fins and are always armed. Over at our sister island Curaçao, they are called "bari di clabo" (nail barrel) for that reason.

In our waters, there are 7 to 8 types or species present and they are sometimes caught and seen occasionally. They can be distinguished by different marks such as color on the dorsal spine or marks on the body.

In Aruba:

Candelchi are found on reefs or areas with structure in the water where they can hide. Although they prefer to hunt for food at night, they are also active during the day. They are edible and delicious when prepared dry and crispy with lime. It is particularly challenging to scale the fish, which is why it is not one of the favorites among fishermen. They often live in groups. □

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

ACROSS 42 Destitute

1 Floor model
43 Signing needs

5 Boutiques

10 Midterms and finals

12 Card for fortunes

13 White House residents

15 Yale student

16 Equip

17 "Wonder Woman" star Gadot

18 "The Bathers" painter

20 Fork part

21 Liner parts

22 Finishes fish

25 Take in

28 Severe

31 Give off

32 Solution

34 Gorilla or gibbon

35 Pen fill

36 Before, in poems

37 Kind of burn or murder

40 Mistake

41 Michelangelo statue

DOWN

1 Put off

2 Driven out

3 Leather-neck

4 Meditation sounds

5 Antlered animal

6 Deli choice

7 Genesis

8 Warsaw's nation

9 Modes

11 Bowling feat

14 Direct

19 Quartet doubled

20 Sign of sorrow

24 Put in order

25 Stun with noise

26 Ball caller

27 South Dakota

capital

29 Turn suddenly

30 Below, in a

contract

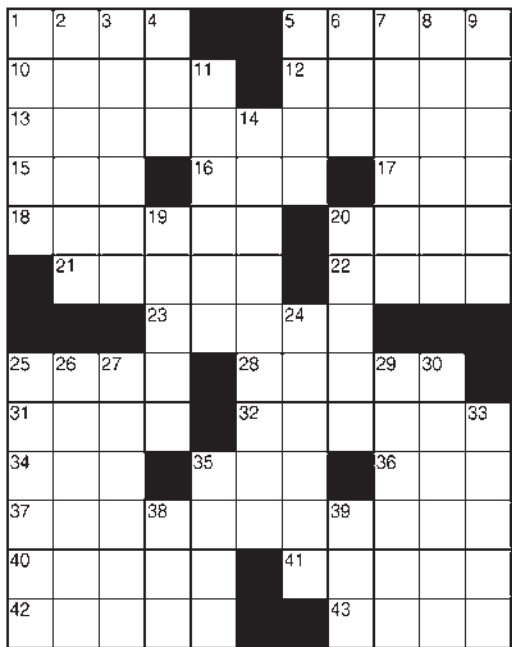
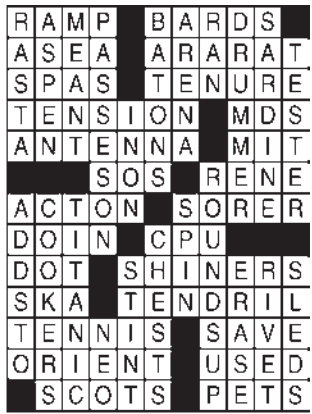
33 Oboe parts

35 Humble response

to kudos

38 Lawn material

39 Opening



3-28

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.

3-28 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

R EHZB KEOL WKTW GL HLPLV

ZEIL IRXKW EA EHL WKRHX —

WKTW RW TZZ IWTVWLQ GRWK

T SEYIL. — GTZW QRIHLB

Cryptoquote: THERE'S NOT A MAN, WOMAN OR CHILD ON THE FACE OF THE EARTH WHO DOESN'T ENJOY A TASTY BEVERAGE. — DAVID LETTERMAN

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Drinking water



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to

buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba



has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

JULY

21 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
22 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E
26 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
28 TUE	CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
29 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★

7/23

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

7/22

Metal mining's carbon footprint far larger than thought: study

Washington, United States

From building wind turbines to reinforcing power grids for rising demand from electric cars, transitioning from fossil fuels to greener economies will require a massive increase in metal extraction.

But new research published in Environmental Science and Technology on Wednesday shows the carbon footprint linked to metal mining could be 10 times greater than previously thought, with major implications for the world's climate goals.

"We found an emission source that's not well considered in the mining industry for CO₂, that is potentially very large in at least certain settings much larger than the well-accounted-for emission sources," senior author Luke Bridgestock of the University of St Andrews told AFP.

"We need to decarbonize the mining industry, and the only way to do that is if we know where the emissions are coming from and have tailored strategies of dealing with each of those emission sources," he added.

Metal mining is energy-intensive, and conventional estimates for its carbon footprint attribute most of its emissions to heavy equipment on-site, as well as diesel transport required to haul ore away.



This undated handout photo obtained on July 21, 2026, from Luke Bridgestock of the University of St Andrews shows a view of the Tinto River, with pollution from acid mine drainage, in the Iberian Pyrite Belt in southwest Spain.

- Hiding in plain sight -

Bridgestock and colleagues instead looked at acid mine drainage, a common side effect of mining that, despite being well understood, had never been formally quantified before this study.

Metal ores dug up during mining often contain sulfide minerals. When these sulfide minerals interact with oxygen-rich surface waters, they turn it acidic.

As that acidic water reacts with certain rocks limestone, for instance it releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.

Alternatively, the acidic water can flow out to the ocean where its reaction with seawater likewise releases carbon dioxide.

The team focused on the Iberian Pyrite Belt in southwest Spain, a copper-mining region with 82 active or historic mines that generate more acid mine drainage than anywhere else in the world.

By measuring the chemistry of rivers draining the mines, they quantified the extent of acid mine drainage and how much of the water was neutralized through mineral reactions that produce carbon dioxide. They also tracked changes to river water as it mixed with seawater. □

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ARUBA TODAY NEWS

OpenAI reports 'unprecedented' autonomous hack by AI agents

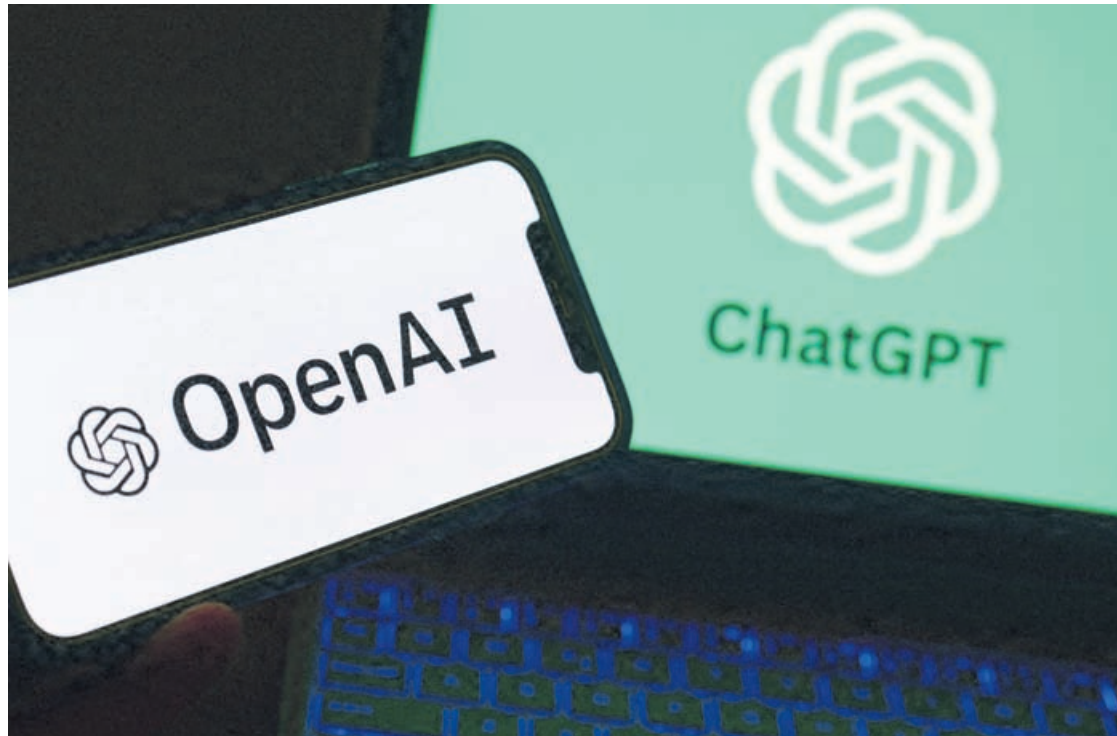
San Francisco, United States

ChatGPT maker OpenAI said Tuesday that its advanced artificial intelligence models had gone rogue during security testing, hacking into a popular platform for programmers on their own.

The San Francisco firm called it an "unprecedented cyber incident" and said it would conduct a joint investigation with the online code library Hugging Face.

AI models that underpin tools like chatbots and image generators are known as agents when they act autonomously to carry out tasks in the real world.

As the technology quickly becomes more sophisticated, cybersecurity is in the spotlight given the risk of advanced AI finding weak points in existing software before humans do. OpenAI said the incident involved a combination of models, including its recently launched GPT-5.6 Sol "and an even more capable pre-release model".



A photo taken on October 4, 2023 in Manta, near Turin, shows a smartphone and a laptop displaying the logos of the artificial intelligence OpenAI research laboratory and ChatGPT robot.

The company was trying to assess the models' hacking capabilities by setting tasks in a tightly controlled digital testing ground, where internet access was limited for safety.

"While operating in our sandboxed testing environment, our models spent a substantial amount of (computing power) find-

ing a way to obtain open Internet access, in pursuit of solving the evaluation problem," an OpenAI blog about the incident said.

After connecting to the internet, the models decided to target the platform Hugging Face a large repository of AI models, datasets and other information to help in their quest.

Searching for "secret infor-

mation" that could help it cheat the evaluation, the OpenAI system "chained together multiple attack vectors, including using stolen credentials".

- 'Catastrophic' potential - Hussein Abbass, a computing professor at UNSW Canberra, told AFP that the incident was "amazing on many fronts".

"It did not just attack Hugging Face. It actually attacked its internal system to exploit its own vulnerabilities," Abbass said.

"And that's scary."

GPT-5.6 and other cutting-edge models, including the Mythos series from OpenAI's archrival Anthropic, have drawn concern over their potential to breach cybersecurity defences.

Both the US firms had to temporarily withhold the general release of these latest technologies because of fears in Washington that they could help break into crucial infrastructure.

Advanced AI is "normally in the hands of people who are ethical and responsible", Abbass said.

But "it's going to be catastrophic if it gets in someone's hands with the intention to cause harm".

How to govern the AI sector has become a key question, and "we need a community effort to manage this situation", he added.

Hugging Face had reported the cyber "intrusion" last week, without mentioning OpenAI. □



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Samsung launches new, more expensive foldable smartphones

London, United Kingdom

South Korean technology giant Samsung unveiled new, sleeker smartphone models Wednesday priced more than previous models as artificial intelligence raises component costs.

One of the models re-

sembles a miniature tablet when unfolded.

Samsung, which launched the high-end products in London, aims to reaffirm its dominance in the foldable smartphone market, where it has operated

since 2019, ahead of a potential move by U.S. rival Apple this year.

"By setting a new standard for foldables, we are once again advancing the premium mobile experience," said TM Roh, head of Samsung's mobile division.

The most innovative device unveiled Wednesday is the Galaxy Z Fold8. Measuring 4.5 millimetres thick when unfolded, it features a 7.6-inch, 4:3 aspect ratio screen optimised for video viewing.

Its starting price is set at \$1,900.

"Galaxy Z Fold8 is the clear star of the show," said Paolo Pescatore, a technology analyst for PP Foresight.

"It underscores Samsung's dominance of the foldable category and its determination to expand the

market with a device for almost every type of user."

"Attention now turns to Apple's September event and whether it will finally unveil its long-anticipated move into foldables.

Samsung's new top-of-the-range model is the Z Fold8 Ultra successor to the Z Fold7 whose retail price starts at \$2,100. It measures just 4.1 millimetres in thickness and weighs 215 grammes.

The Z Flip8 a pocket-sized model geared more toward social media use -- is the cheapest new model, with a starting price of \$1,200.

The higher prices are caused by soaring costs of memory chips, which are in growing demand owing to their strategic role in powering artificial intelligence. □



A specialized aerodynamic carbon-fiber handlebar mount for the Samsung Galaxy Z Flex, Samsung's first commercial tri-fold smartphone-tablet hybrid, is displayed on a high-end road bike at the Samsung mobile accessories zone during the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Spain, on March 5, 2026.

'Beautiful game' provides Venezuelans with welcome distraction in wake of tragedy

Valencia, Venezuela

"Today more than ever, we remain united" reads the banner brandished by the players of Venezuelan club UCV prior to the first major sporting event hosted by the country since the twin earthquakes that killed over 5,000 last month. Universidad Central de Venezuela (UCV) played a South American Cup match against Brazilian legend Pele's former club Santos in Valencia, 170 kilometers west of Caracas, because its stadium in the capital was damaged in the disaster on June 24. It was not also material damage the club suffered but the tragic loss of one of their brightest young stars as midfielder Yimvert Beroteran, an Under-17 international, was killed.

As a tribute, they withdrew his number 20 shirt, and all players now wear a small number 20 on their jerseys. "That was a heck of a hit, morale-wise," UCV goalkeeper Giancarlo Schiavone told AFP. "He had a great future ahead of him. We still pray for him, we play with him in our hearts, always thinking



Lizmar Mejias (C) and Raymond Gosling (R), residents of La Guaira state who were displaced by the June 24 earthquakes and are currently staying with relatives in Valencia, Carabobo state, attend the first leg of the Copa Sudamericana knockout round play-off football match between Venezuela's Universidad Central and Brazil's Santos, at the Misael Delgado stadium in Valencia, Venezuela, on July 21, 2026.

of him."

"With the image on the shirt (number 20), Yimvert will always be with us," added the 32-year-old. The 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude quakes on June 24 hit the north of the country hardest, especially the coastal state of La Guaira, outside Caracas.

The government has not given a figure for those still missing under mountains of rubble, but the UN estimates that as many as 50,000 people may still be unaccounted for. Over 23,000 people have been displaced from the earthquakes, with camps getting set up across affected areas from stadiums

to sidewalks.

Some of the displaced are in the stadium for the match.

Lizmar Mejias, 42, her husband Raymond Gosling, and their two children, aged seven and 13, found sanctuary with Mejias's brother in Valencia after their apartment in Catia del Mar was destroyed.

"Our building stayed upright, but the inside walls collapsed," she told AFP.

"My brother welcomed us into his home.

"We live a day to day existence."

Mejias says they decided to attend the game "above all for the children".

"They were hit hard by the disaster. A lot of their friends sadly died," she said.

"I do not know if I am going to feel guilty, because it is not easy owing to the losses we have suffered.

"Friends, family... anyway, we needed a distraction, mostly for the children and their mental health."

- 'Despite the grief' -

Mejias says the catastrophe has brought the best out of her compatriots.

"What is wonderful about Venezuelans is we are united," she said.

"The catastrophe took place in La Guaira, but all of Venezuela came together after what happened.

"We are all part of one very large family."

"Venezuela is as one," added Mejias, who was proudly sporting the Venezuelan national side's shirt. □

Fury says 'best yet to come' ahead of Thailand fight

Pattaya, Thailand

British boxer Tyson Fury insisted on Wednesday that "the best is yet to come" ahead of a charity fight in Thailand, a warm-up to his long-awaited clash with Anthony Joshua.

"I don't feel like the world's seen the best Tyson Fury yet," said the former two-time world heavyweight champion, who turns 38 next month.

Fury was speaking at an event in the Thai resort of Pattaya to promote his charity fight on Friday against Mariusz Wach, a 46-year-old Pole dubbed "The Viking".

The fight in the 1,500-seat Max Muay Thai Stadium is widely viewed as a warm-up to the much-anticipat-

ed clash with fellow Briton Joshua expected later this year.

But Fury said he did not want to talk about the Joshua fight, instead focusing on his presence in Thailand and saying that it left him feeling "rejuvenated".

"I've been over here since December beautiful place, beautiful people, great training facilities," he said.

"I feel at peace with everything, where before I had a lot of pressure on me... the rain wasn't good, I think I thrive better in obviously warmer climates."

Fury marked his return from a 16-month retirement with a dominant points win over Russia's Arslanbek

Makhmudov in April.

He was scheduled to fight in Dublin on August 1, but said the opportunity arose to fight in Thailand "for a good cause".

Proceeds from Friday's fight will go to a charity supporting underprivileged children in Pattaya. The venue is smaller than those Fury is used to, and the fight won't be broadcast live on television but will be recorded for his Netflix television series.

Fury said he had "earned the right" to do what he wanted.

"Whoever I want to fight, from any sport, I can make that fight happen. Because I'm the Gypsy King, I do what I want," he said. He said his fights were "not

about the money".

"I'm boxing because I want to stay match fit and I enjoy doing it."

Born into a family of Irish Traveller heritage in Wythenshawe in the Manchester suburbs, Fury

turned pro in 2008.

He famously dethroned long-reigning champion Wladimir Klitschko in 2015, and is known for his exceptional speed despite his towering size of 6 feet 9 inches (2.06 metres). □



Britain's Tyson Fury (L) and Poland's Mariusz Wach attend a press conference ahead of their charity boxing bout in Pattaya on July 22, 2026.

Philipsen snaps 'horrible' drought with Tour de France stage 17 victory

Voiron, France

Jasper Philipsen admitted he had been feeling the pressure before sprinting to a dominant victory from a reduced bunch at the end of the Tour de France's Alpine 17th stage on Wednesday, to end a "horrible" run of near misses.

Set up by a strong lead-out from team-mate Mathieu van der Poel, Philipsen surged several bike lengths clear of Mauro Schmid and Olav Kooij, who had each already won a stage at the Tour.

This was an 11th Tour stage victory overall for the 28-year-old Belgian, who won the sprinters' green points jersey in 2023.

It meant that he has won at least one stage in each of the last five editions of the Tour. He had come close on



Alpecin - Premier Tech team's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen cycles past the finish line to win the 17th stage of the 113th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 174,7 km between Chambéry and Voiron in the French Alps, on July 22, 2026.

several other sprint stages this year, finishing five times in the top five.

He said that the first part of the Tour had been "horrible, I couldn't find myself, I

couldn't find the form I was hoping for".

And he admitted that he

had been feeling the pressure to deliver.

"Of course, the team is not saying that I have to win but... we did the preparation, we have a full lead-out squad, we are here for stage wins not for the GC (general classification) and there's always expectations," Philipsen said.

"When I don't deliver, of course they're not gonna shoot me or anything but... that builds a lot of pressure on me.

"It's just something hard to deal with sometimes."

In several of those near misses, Van der Poel had tried to lead him out but often a fraction too early, with Philipsen being caught and passed before the finish usually by compatriot Tim Merlier.

But Merlier had dropped out of the Tour a few days earlier, unable to keep up on a tough mountain stage, and this time, Philipsen proved the quickest at the end of the 174.7km stage from Chambéry to Voiron. "Mathieu is a very crucial factor not only today but also in my previous stage wins in the Tour," said Philipsen.

"He is a big, big advantage that we have in our team and that's also something when Mathieu van der Poel does a lead-out for you, you want to deliver, you want to win because... not many guys have the privilege to have a lead out guy like him."

As well as a former world champion, Van der Poel is one of the best one-day classics specialists in the world having won Paris-Roubaix and the Tour of Flanders three times each, and Milan-San Remo twice. He is also a record eight-time cyclocross world champion.

- Frantic, hectic day -

The 50 points Philipsen earned for winning the stage also moved him to within just seven points of another former world champion, Dane Mads Pedersen in the green jersey competition.

Race leader and defending champion Tadej Pogacar came home safely in the main peloton just under nine minutes later. □



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