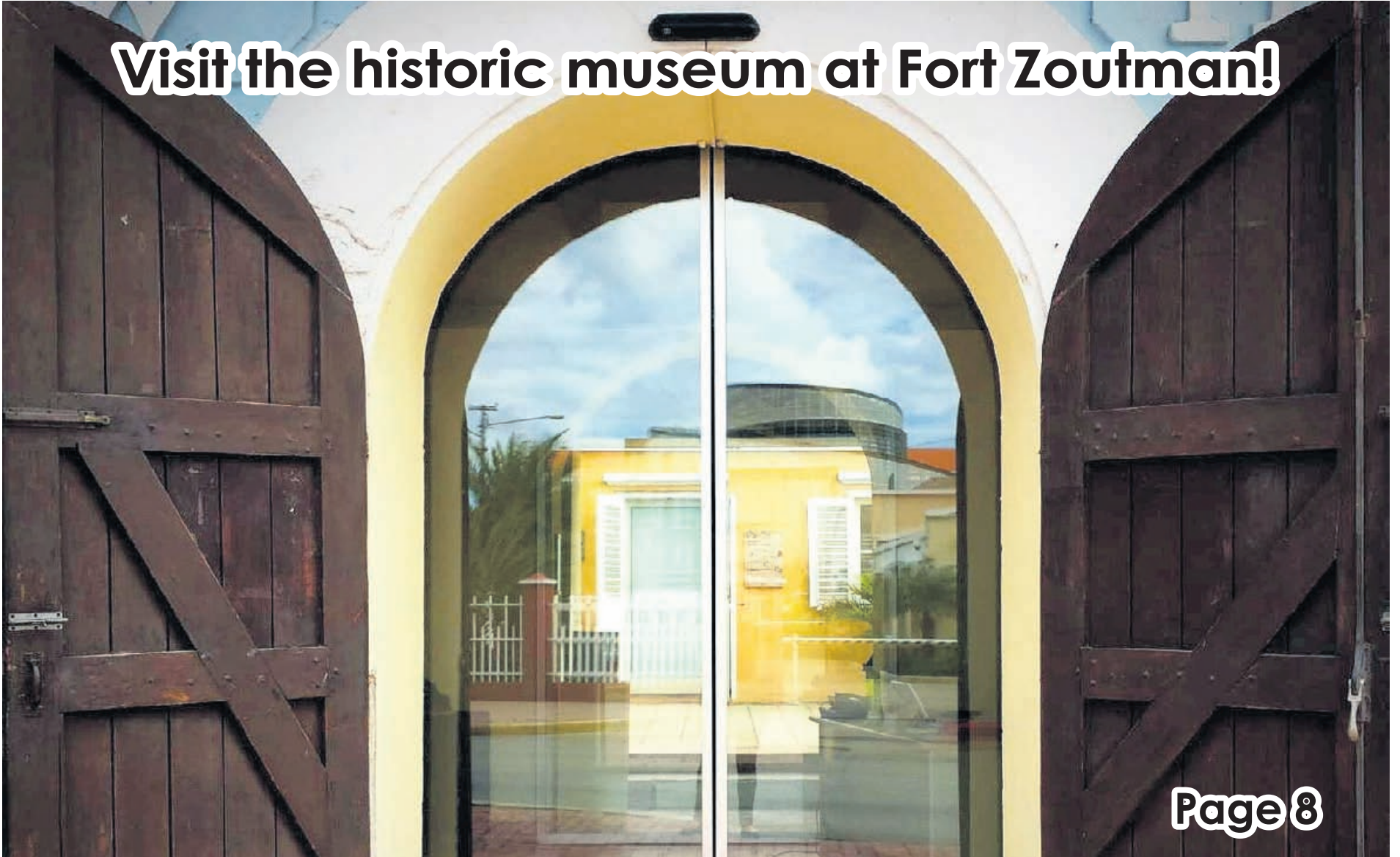




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Musk plans major Republican midterm spending push: report

Washington, United States

Elon Musk, the world's richest person, is preparing a major spending push to help Republicans retain control of Congress in November's midterm elections, Axios reported Thursday.

The reported splurge will revive the political operation that made Musk the biggest financial backer of Donald Trump's stunning return to power in the 2024 presidential election.

The tech multi-billionaire plans to reactivate America PAC, the political organization that spent more than \$260 million supporting Trump's bid, according to people familiar with the effort cited by Axios.

The group is expected to focus on door-to-door canvassing, digital advertising and direct mail aimed at mobilizing conservative voters who are less likely to participate in non-presidential elections.

Musk has not specified how much he intends to spend. America PAC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The intervention could provide a significant boost to Republicans as Trump's



Elon Musk looks on during a Cabinet Meeting in the Cabinet Room of the White House March 24, 2025 in Washington, DC.

weak approval ratings, concerns over the economy and opposition to the Iran war threaten the party's narrow House and Senate majorities.

Republican committees and allied groups already hold a large financial advantage over Democrats, while Trump's MAGA Inc. organization has amassed hundreds of millions of dollars.

Musk's renewed involvement follows a turbulent relationship with Trump.

After briefly serving in the administration as head of the Department of Government Efficiency, Musk fell out publicly with the president over Republican spending legislation and suggested he might create a third party.

He later resumed giving to Republican causes, including multimillion-dollar do-

nations to individual candidates and conservative political groups.

Musk's campaign activity has also generated legal controversy.

A federal judge ordered him to testify in lawsuits accusing America PAC of misleading voters over its promise to award \$1 million daily to registered voters who signed a political petition before the 2024 election. The plaintiffs argue the

winners were not selected randomly, as Musk had suggested, but chosen because they could serve as effective spokespeople for the group.

A Wisconsin panel also found that similar promised payments during a state Supreme Court campaign may have violated bribery laws. Musk's return highlights the increasingly powerful role of ultra-wealthy donors in US elections.

Billionaire families have already contributed hundreds of millions of dollars to the 2026 campaign, with the large majority flowing to Republican candidates and organizations, according to US media analyses of federal election filings.

Democrats also benefit from wealthy donors, including George and Alex Soros, Reid Hoffman and Michael Bloomberg, but Republican-aligned billionaires have so far given far more. America PAC's effort will reportedly be led by Musk political advisor Chris Young and coordinated with other Republican groups, allowing them to concentrate more heavily on television advertising. □

Trump weighs pulling attorney general nominee after revolt

Washington, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump said Thursday he could temporarily withdraw Todd Blanche's nomination for U.S. attorney general after two Republican senators forced the postponement of a crucial confirmation vote.

Trump said Blanche, his former personal lawyer and current acting attorney general, could be renominated after Senators John Cornyn of Texas and Thom Tillis of North Carolina leave office in January.

"I have no objection to temporarily withdrawing

Todd's name, if they do not do the right thing, and putting him back after Cornyn and Tillis are out of office," Trump wrote on his website, Truth Social.

Blanche would remain acting attorney general in the meantime, Trump said, calling him a "star" with the potential to become one of the greatest holders of the office.

The Senate Judiciary Committee had been due to vote Thursday on advancing Blanche's nomination, but Republican leaders postponed the meeting after negotiations failed to win over Cornyn and Tillis.

Republicans control the panel 12-10, meaning either senator could join unified Democratic opposition and block the nomination from reaching the

Senate floor.

The dispute centers on an extraordinary settlement between Trump and the administration he controls over the illegal disclosure of his tax records.

The agreement proposed a \$1.8 billion fund for people claiming they had been victims of politically motivated prosecutions and offered Trump, his family and businesses broad protection from tax audits and other government claims.

Blanche has said the so-called anti-weaponization fund will not proceed, but Cornyn and Tillis demanded a formal written commitment preventing its revival and language narrowing the tax protections. Cornyn accused the Justice Department of "stonewalling" his requests, saying officials had "simply

refused to cooperate."

The administration says it has provided new language and remains in talks with the senators, leaving open the possibility of rescheduling the vote before the Senate's August recess.

The settlement has intensified broader concerns that Blanche has acted and would continue to act as Trump's personal attorney rather than an independent chief law enforcement officer.

Before joining the administration, Blanche defended Trump in criminal proceedings. As acting attorney general, he has overseen cases against presidential adversaries while defending legal arrangements favorable to Trump and his allies. □



Acting U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche testifies during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on his nomination to be Attorney General, on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on July 15, 2026.



U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa (L), listen as national anthems are played during an honor cordon welcoming ceremony at the Pentagon in Washington, DC on June 15, 2026.

Renewed Iran war raises U.S. missile supply concerns

Washington, United States

Tehran's forces have carried out frequent missile and drone attacks in the Middle East since the breakdown of the US-Iran ceasefire, raising renewed concerns about Washington's supply of the weapons needed to intercept them.

Highlighting the issue, the US military said it shot down multiple ballistic missiles fired by Tehran in an "attempted surprise attack" this week, following a deadly Iranian strike on American troops in Jordan earlier this month.

Some lawmakers have raised questions about whether the United States has sufficient munitions since early in the war, which began with U.S.-Israeli strikes in late February before the fighting largely halted under an April ceasefire, only to resume in recent weeks.

"We have depleted our interceptors... which are, obviously, necessary to protect American troops," U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen said Sunday on ABC's "This Week."

"We are depleting these every day, despite the fact that we could face other potential conflicts around the world," the Democrat added.

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has previously dismissed fears about Washington's weapons supplies, and the U.S. military has not publicly released details about how many interceptors it has.

But US media outlets have reported that General Dan Caine, the chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, has raised concerns about falling U.S. interceptor supplies. President Donald Trump was asked about the issue on Monday and said that while stocks are sufficient, he wants more.

"We have a lot of ammunition, different types," Trump told journalists aboard Air Force One, while adding: "For some of the more sophisticated stuff, we'd certainly like to have more." Trump took aim at Joe Biden, saying "so much was given to Ukraine" by the Democratic president, who sought to help Kyiv's forces defend against repeated Russian missile and drone attacks.

- 'Extensive use of interceptors' -

But Trump's war against Iran has resulted in major reductions in US weapons supplies.

An analysis by the Center for Strategic and Interna-

tional Studies (CSIS) think tank released this week found that US stocks of key Patriot and THAAD air defense missiles have been slashed by the conflict.

Before it began, the United States had more than 2,300 Patriot and more than 450 THAAD interceptors figures that CSIS estimated have been roughly halved or more in the subsequent five months of war.

"The air defense campaign has been largely successful with high though not perfect interception rates," but "this has required extensive use of interceptors," CSIS said.

The United States is pushing hard for defense companies to increase the pace at which weapons including interceptors are produced. Trump referred to these efforts on Monday, saying: "Plants are being built. A lot of equipment is being built. The Patriots, in particular, are being built."

The Defense Department announced a \$58.6 billion, seven-year deal with Lockheed Martin for Patriot missile production this week that the company said will deliver "critical interceptors into the hands of warfighters at unmatched speed." □



United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres prior to a meeting with members of U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee May 17, 2018 on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. Secretary General Guterres will meet with U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in the afternoon.

Grynspan ahead in process to pick next U.N. chief: diplomats

United Nations, United States

United Nations insider Rebeca Grynspan was leading in the first round of the process to pick the next U.N. chief that began Thursday, diplomatic sources told AFP.

Grynspan, the former vice-president of Costa Rica and head of the U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, was followed by former Guyanese foreign minister Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, according to two diplomatic sources briefed on the results.

Argentina's Rafael Grossi, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), was in third.

The U.N. Security Council met Thursday for the first so-called "straw poll" to gauge support for the seven candidates for the secretary-general role.

Some have criticized the polling as opaque. It began in the early 1980s in an attempt to break a deadlock between two candidates whose bids were shut down by vetoes.

Four women and three men are so far in the running to succeed Antonio Guterres of Portugal, who will complete his second five-year term on December 31, 2026. Nominations are still open, raising the prospect of late entrants.

The other nominees are Michelle Bachelet of Chile, Maria Fernanda Espinosa of Ecuador, Olara Otunnu of Uganda and Macky Sall of Senegal.

Although IAEA chief Grossi has arguably the best name recognition, observers say there is no clear favorite in the race that could last several months.

The Security Council president, Zenon Ngay Mukongo of the Democratic Republic of Congo, confirmed a second round of the straw poll would be announced in the coming days.

Diplomats are reluctant to predict the outcome because the council's five permanent members -- the United States, Russia, China, France, and the United Kingdom have yet to indicate their preferences. Even if a candidate bags the required nine votes from the 15 available in the council, they must also avoid a veto by the five major powers, which are deeply divided.

Once a candidate clears those bars, their name will go to the General Assembly of all UN member states for confirmation. □

Marvel announces 'Black Panther III' at Comic-Con

San Diego, United States
Superhero movie fans will officially return to the world of Wakanda in "Black Panther III," the newest entry in the Marvel film franchise, the studio announced at Comic-Con on Saturday. British actor David Jonsson will play the lead role in the film, due out on December 15, 2028.

Known for his performances in the HBO television series "Industry" and the 2025 film "The Long Walk," Jonsson steps into the Marvel Cinematic Universe as the son of T'Challa, the original Black Panther superhero played by actor Chadwick Boseman.

Boseman, who rocketed to fame in 2018's "Black Panther," died in 2020 at the age of 43 as a result of colon cancer.

Marvel announced the Black Panther three-quel with Jonsson appearing in front of thousands of fans at Comic-Con's famous Hall H.

"Thank you to this amazing family that I have the honor and the privilege and the blessing to join," Jonsson told the crowd.

"I actually don't want to say too much because I want to let this screen do the talk," he said.

Oscar-winning filmmaker Ryan Coogler, who directed the first two "Black



David Jonsson` attends the Marvel Studios Panel at 2026 San Diego Comic-Con on July 25, 2026 in San Diego, California.

Panther" films, will return to helm the third.

"Today is extra special," Coogler said, joining Jonsson and Marvel executive producer Kevin Feige on stage.

Coogler told the audience "Black Panther III" will follow T'Challa's son as he comes of age and follows in his father's superhero-sized footsteps.

The first "Black Panther" film grossed \$1.3 billion when it was released in 2018, starring Boseman alongside a cast including Michael B. Jordan who won this year's Best Actor Oscar Angela Bassett, Lupita Nyong'o, Forest Whitaker, Danai Guri-

ra, and Letitia Wright, many of whom reprised their appearances in "Black Panther 2."

- 'Ghost Rider' rides again -

Another bombshell reveal was the welcome of Ryan Gosling to the Marvel Cinematic Universe, where he will take on the role of Johnny Blaze in "Ghost Rider," slated to hit theaters in 2028. "Is this really happening?" Gosling said onstage alongside Feige.

Marvel Studios returned to Hall H after skipping last year's event, less than five months before the release of its highly anticipated "Avengers: Doomsday."

The studio brought to the stage Anthony and Joe Russo, the directors of the film, as well as several of its stars including Robert Downey Jr., who will play the villain Victor Von Doom. The latest superhero film will pick up where 2019's "Endgame" left off, bringing together heroes and villains from X-Men, the Avengers, Black Panther and the Fantastic Four to duke it out once more.

Capes and masks of the nefarious Victor Von Doom were handed out before Marvel's presentation, transforming the audience into a green army.

Some fans had waited sev-

eral nights to get into the venue to hear from their favorite studio.

"We're all here for the same reason we love it, we love the feeling we get when we come to Hall H," Wally, a man from neighboring Orange County who slept outside the venue for two nights, told AFP.

"It was worth it, it was better than expected... I'm speechless," he said after the presentation.

- Apple TV's debut -

Earlier in the day, Apple TV made its debut in the coveted Hall H, offering a first look at its upcoming action comedy "Matchbox: The Movie."

The streaming platform unveiled some footage from the flick, which stars John Cena, Jessica Biel, Sam Richardson, Teyonah Parris and Arturo Castro.

The film is inspired by the famous toy cars, which Biel said she grew up playing with her brother.

"It's like being a kid again," she said.

Apple TV also offered an early look at its science-fiction production "Neuromancer," based on William Gibson's 1984 novel, and "Mayday," a comedy set during the Cold War starring Ryan Reynolds and Kenneth Branagh.

Comic-Con runs through Sunday, July 26. □

George and Amal Clooney flee French home due to wildfire



U.S. actor George Clooney and his wife Amal Clooney arrive to attend A King's Trust celebration at the Royal Albert Hall in London on May 11, 2026, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of The King's Trust.

Marseille, France

Hollywood star George Clooney and his human rights lawyer wife Amal have evacuated their French home near the southeastern town of Brignoles after a fast-moving wildfire broke out nearby, authorities said Thursday.

Over the past week, France has been battling some of the country's worst forest fires in living memory.

The largest fire has ravaged 42,000 hectares (103,000 acres) an area larger than the US city of Detroit in the southwest of France.

The Clooneys, who have nine-year-old twins, own the Domaine du Canadel, an estate near Brignoles where a fire broke out on Wednesday evening.

"At this point we have no idea whether our beautiful home makes it through this terrible moment," the couple said in a let-

ter to the mayor of Brignoles quoted by People magazine.

They said they hoped all their neighbours remained safe.

"Amal and I are committed to making sure that whatever happens to our village, we are part of this community and we'll be part of making it whole," the letter said.

Authorities confirmed the authenticity of the letter. The mayor said the celebrity couple were not required to evacuate but chose to leave the property as a precaution. Clooney's estate includes a 18th-century manor house, a pond, a swimming pool, and vineyards, set within a 170-hectare (420-acre) property.

The blaze in Brignoles has burned 130 hectares (321 acres) and forced more than 600 people to evacuate, firefighters and authorities said. Most people were able to return home on Thursday. □

Campari - king of the spritz - hopes to conquer American heartland

Novi Ligure, Italy

Whether made with Aperol, Campari or Sarti, the spritz has rapidly established itself on terraces across Europe—with Italy's Campari Group now hoping to conquer the heart of America.

After 20 years spent winning over Europeans to Italy's northern tradition first in Germany and Austria, then in France and Spain the Campari Group has set its sights on areas still unaware of the orange, red or pink phenomenon.

Top among them are the United States, where Americans on both coasts enjoy the cocktail hour staple but whose interior has yet to be seduced by the spritz.

Back in Italy at Novi Ligure, between Milan and Genoa, Campari's flagship plant is running at full capacity, producing several tens of thousands of bottles of the red alcoholic liqueur per hour, in three eight-hour shifts.

Inside huge stainless steel vats each holding enough to make a million spritzes -- blends of herbs, spices and roots are ready to infuse in alcohol.

The recipe enhanced by artificial colours is jealously guarded.

"Even I don't know it," insisted Campari's head of



Managing Director House of Aperitifs of Campari, Andrea Neri, poses the Campari Group facility in Novi Ligure, near Alessandria, northern Italy, on July 21, 2026.

aperitifs, Andrea Neri, during a factory visit by AFP.

- Aperitivo -

The spritz tradition dates back to Austria's occupation of northeast Italy in the 19th century. When the wine was of poor quality or the weather hot, soldiers would dilute or "spritzen" or spray in German their drink with sparkling water.

Eventually, Aperol, a light (11–12% ABV) and sweet spirit made from bitter oranges, gentian and rhubarb came to replace the wine

-- the forerunner of the spritz was born.

When the Campari Group bought Aperol in 2003, the brand was confined to its historic northern Italian triangle between Venice, Padua, and Treviso.

But the Milanese company gradually made inroads beyond its home territory, until Aperol usually consumed combined with prosecco, sparkling water, ice cubes and a slice of orange accounted for nearly a third of its sales in the first half of 2026, out of annual revenue

of three billion euros (\$3.4 billion) in revenue.

For Michele Costabile, a marketing professor at Luiss University in Rome, Campari managed to turn the spritz into an Italian product that was instantly recognisable and easy to export.

In his view, the group understood before many others that the "aperitivo" to be enjoyed before dinner had to become a fun ritual at once simple, elegant and accessible.

Aperol offered a recognisable glass, an easy-to-repro-

duce recipe, and a market position midway between beer or wine and more elaborate cocktails.

Campari has also used Aperol as a springboard to introduce their other spritz-friendly brands to Europeans, Neri said such as Cynar, made from artichokes, the bitter, bright red Campari, and the pink and fruity Sarti.

- Coachella -

But with growth slowing after several exceptional years, the company which also produces vodka, the bitter Picon aperitif and the orange and cognac-based Grand Marnier is looking further afield. In California, Aperol has been a sponsor of the Coachella music festival for the past four years. But more of the country is to be conquered, with company executives saying they would focus a campaign on weekend brunch. Sarti was launched in the country earlier this summer. Neri said Campari has no intention, however, of moving its Aperol production to the United States.

Another challenge is defending Aperol's distinctive character for a spritz which is not a registered trademark particularly in Italy, where some establishments serve lower-cost alternatives without clearly identifying them. □

Pakistan's transgender community protests soaring prices

Karachi, Pakistan

Hundreds of transgender Pakistanis and supporters protested against surging inflation in the southern city of Karachi on Wednesday, as a spike in prices amid the Middle East war disproportionately hits the vulnerable community.

Though Pakistan's transgender community has received legal protections in recent years, many face social and family stigma, often leading to economic deprivation that forces some to earn an income from begging.

The country, a key mediator between the United States and Iran, has seen soaring prices that threatened an already fragile economy during months of fighting and disruptions to

global energy shipments. Demonstrators in Pakistan's largest city chanted and held up signs emblazoned with slogans such as "high fuel prices, empty plates" and called for relief from spiking prices and help finding secure employment.

"We beg on the streets, you beg at the IMF," read one protester's sign a reference to Pakistan's multi-billion dollar bailout deal with the global lender.

Organisers said they had experienced soaring costs for rent, fuel and food and called on the government to pay more attention to protecting vulnerable populations, whose small budgets were disproportionately eaten into by

more expensive essential items.

The country has long recognised a third sex, known as "khawaja sira", who for centuries have played a spiritual role in society, offering blessings at weddings and births.

"The khwaja sira community should be respected and honoured," said Aradhiya Khan, from the Gender Interactive Alliance advocacy group that organised the protest.

Pakistan's inflation rate leapt to 10 percent in the three months after the conflict began, from 5.5 percent in the July-February period, according to a government survey.

In June, consumer prices rose 11.1 percent from a year earlier, the official sta-

tistics agency said.

Shahzadi Rai, a transgender protester and advocate, said many from the khwaja sira community had struggled to find work, which worsened the im-

pact of rising prices.

"In Pakistan, it's very difficult to survive for a cis(gender) person," Rai said.

But: "for the trans community, it's really hard." □



Transgender community members holding placards demonstrate a protest against inflation and rising fuel prices in Karachi on July 29, 2026.

Stranded boats, out-of-work fishermen as Danube hits record lows

Corabia, Romania

The tourist port in the Romanian town of Corabia, on the banks of the Danube river, is deserted except for a few pleasure boats stranded in the algae.

The waters of the river are so low that vessels can no longer get in or out due to sandbars.

"Last year we could swim across but now the water only comes up to our chests," said 71-year-old Doru, pointing to an island in the river.

"In two years, we'll be able to just walk across," the fisherman, who only gave his first name, told AFP.

The waters of the mighty Danube, Europe's second longest river, have dropped in parts to a record low due to prolonged rain shortages and successive heatwaves that have parched the continent since May.

From its source in the Black Forest mountains of western Germany to its mouth on the Black Sea in the east, countries along its 2,850-kilometre (1,770-mile) route are feeling the impact.

In Slovakia and Hungary in central Europe to Romania and Bulgaria further east, ships are unable to travel fully loaded along the wa-



A boat lies in the shallow water of the Danube river in Corabia, southern Romania on July 24, 2026.

terway and face lengthy waits.

Hungary has reduced the output of its nuclear power plant, which relies on the waters of the Danube for cooling, while Romania shut down the two reactors at the Cernavoda plant, the first time both had been shut at the same time because of low water levels.

Already harsh, this current drought was made even more severe by human-caused climate change, according to a report published last week by the World

Weather Attribution group of scientists.

The river is at a 30-year drop in Romania and Slovakia and at its lowest ever in Hungary.

- Navigation problems -

At the Vidin-Calafat bridge connecting Bulgaria and Romania across the Danube, Bulgarian fishermen complained of being out of work because the low water levels had trapped their boats onshore.

"It's never dried up this much before," fisherman Rossen

Dobrev told AFP. "Now we can even walk all the way to Romania."

"I've been a fisherman for 39 years and there's never been a drought like this before," sighed fellow fisherman Aleksandar Angelov.

"The people in charge up there need to take action," the 59-year-old continued, his brow deeply furrowed. "We don't have any water here."

Ferry service between Romania and Bulgaria have been suspended temporarily in two areas.

A cruise ship with almost 200 passengers had to be evacuated in Bulgaria this week after it ran aground on the Danube because of low water levels.

Commercial shipping is also affected.

"Cargo vessels are being forced to wait or sail with a reduced load," a spokesperson at the Bulgarian government's Danube agency told AFP.

In Romania, the water level along parts of the Danube is already one metre (three feet) below the minimum navigable.

"This is an exceptional situation... We're surprised by this very, very low level," Adrian Maizel, from the administration monitoring traffic on the Danube, told AFP.

"We are making efforts to maintain a navigable channel as much as possible albeit a narrower one so that navigation is not completely blocked," he added of the administration's dredging operations.

Both countries recorded low water levels much sooner than last year.

In the Hungarian capital Budapest, further upstream, the Danube has dropped to its lowest level since measurements began.

Dozens of Hungarian cities and villages along the river introduced water restrictions during the June heatwave. By July, several cruises had been suspended as well. At Slovakia's Gabčíkovo dam, further upstream again, lock operations have slowed down, causing longer waiting times, and captains are being urged to check their vessels' navigability.

- 'Like quicksand' -

With the heat expected to last, there is no immediate relief in sight.

"I've lived here for 25 years and the water has never been this low," said pensioner Mitica Nicolae from Corabia as he fished in an irrigation canal close to the river.

The 65-year-old, who checks public radio every morning for the latest Danube water report, said he was catching fewer fish than before and feared for farm crops. □

Mexico escalates war against smelly seaweed on Caribbean beaches

Mexico City, Mexico

Mexico is deploying specialized navy ships to fight a massive influx of sargassum on the country's Ca-

ribbean beaches, authorities said Thursday, as the smelly seaweed threatens the crucial tourism sector. Some days, more than

9,000 tons of the brownish seaweed are piling onto Mexico's shores, including in the world-renowned resort cities of Cancun and Playa del Carmen, Environmental Secretary Alicia Barcena told reporters.

"This has been a really difficult, atypical year," she said. The amount of sargassum on Mexico's beaches this year is a four-fold jump from last year, and 27 times more than the historic average.

As part of its \$115 million response, Mexico has deployed a fleet of specialized anti-sargassum boats, including two open ocean ships and amphibious vehicles, Naval Secretary Raymundo Morales said.

Over 500 personnel in pro-

jective gear have been posted on beaches to clean up the foul-smelling weeds.

The haul is sold to private buyers for various uses, including energy production.

Tourism is a major industry in Mexico, with the state of Quintana Roo home to Cancun and Playa del Carmen bringing in more than \$18 billion in tourism revenue last year.

Barcena said the "massive arrival" of sargassum is due to irregular ocean currents starting in 2011.

Originating in the Atlantic Ocean's Sargasso Sea, sargassum was pushed by clockwise currents into nutrient-rich waters where it has exploded in growth. □



Sargassum covers a beach in Tulum, Quintana Roo, Mexico, on July 27, 2026. Large amounts of the brown seaweed continue to wash ashore along Mexico's Caribbean coast, affecting beaches, tourism and coastal ecosystems during the annual sargassum season.

Basic driving rules on Aruba: Traffic signs

(Oranjestad)—Though Aruba's traffic is relatively easy to manage, driving here—especially if it's your first time visiting—can be foreign. To help you out, here's a breakdown of some traffic signs you might encounter on the road.

Speed limit in certain areas

As mentioned in yesterday's issue, the legal minimum and maximum speed limit on the island is 50 and 80 km/h respectively. However, there are some areas where it is mandated to drive up to a certain speed. This is always indicated by a circular traffic sign with red border and the number 50 on it. Signs like these are always paired by a similar sign with the number crossed out further down the road. This means that the mandate for this speed is now over; you may increase your velocity. Red borders on traffic sign—whether it's a circle or triangle—usually signal a warning, prohibition or preference.

Besides the "50" sign, you may also encounter a traffic sign that says "bebouwde kom". These can be found in San Nicolas and Oranjestad. Bebouwde kom signs are rectangular and blue, and essentially tell you that you are in a heavily inhabited area. The maximum speed limit in a bebouwde kom is 50 km/h. Just like the previous pair, bebouwde kom signs are also paired with a similar sign crossed out.

Priority signs

On the main roads of Aruba (not the highways), you may see a yellow, squared sign with a white border. This sign tells you that on this road, you have priority and all other traffic should yield to you. This sign can be seen in Savaneta for example. So, if you are driving on the main road in Savaneta going to San Nicolas, you are driving on a single long road, and other cars that want to get on this main road or cross it, either from an intersection or from a dirt road, must all wait until traffic on the main road is clear. In other words, you do not have to stop for them. This sign too has a counter part that indicates that your priority is over.

Another priority sign you may encounter is a triangle sign with a red border and something that looks like a cross. You'll see this sign in an intersection. The general rule of thumb for crossing an intersection that do not contain traffic lights, roundabouts, sign or arrows on the road, is to always yield for traffic on your right. However, if you encounter this sign on your side of the intersection, you have priority over the other cars, even the one on your right.

However, be careful not to confuse this sign with a similar up-side down triangle, also found on intersections. This sign is a prohibition sign, telling you that you have to stop and give other cars priority. Of course you also have a "stop" sign that mean the same thing. The stop sign is generally used for tricky intersections with minimal view of opposite incoming traffic.

These are some of the basic rules that you would have to know if you decide to drive on the island. These are of course other traffic signs, and we recommend you visit aruba-travelguide.com for an extensive overview of all traffic signs used on Aruba. □

Picture credits: aruba-travelguide.com



Aruba to me

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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 disman-

fling.

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, offering 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. □



Birds of Aruba: Soaring through the blue skies

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's nature is very diverse and is home to several beautiful and majestic wildlife. Among these is the bright Trupial, whose angelic voice is always heard with the rising sun; the cuddly parakeet, always in

company of another, and the majestic Warawara, a mighty bird that can be seen soaring in the clear blue skies.

Trupial



Icterus icterus, or known locally as the Venezuelan or Orange Troupial, is a striking songbird whose bright orange feathers can be spotted from a far distance. Known to be the first bird to sing at the first sign of sunrise, this beloved songbird likes to wake up with a tune. But don't let their angelic songs fool you; the Trupial can be a bit aggressive towards any threat,

protective over their nesting spots—nesting spots they most likely stole from other birds. Trupials can be seen regularly, often in trees or on top of a cactus.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Prikichi (parakeet)
The Brown-throated Prikichi (Aratinga pertinax) became the national bird of Aruba back in 2015, at the request of Aruba Birdlife Conservation. The bright green, adorable parakeet usually flies in flock of 30 or more, but its population has been declining since



the 2010s. Prikichis are a shier breed than the trupial, often flying away at the sign of any threat. They use termite nests for breeding spots and feed mostly on seeds from the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi tree and fruits.

Photo Credit: Daniel Ruben Gonzalez

Warawara
The Warawara or Caracara is one of the biggest birds found in the Aruban mondi. At a height of 41 to 60 cm, their wingspan can measure up to 125 cm. Known as the “garbage man”, this bird of prey mostly feeds on dead animals. Its coat is dark brown, with a cream-colored neck, orange face, thick beak and long legs. The Warawara prefers to build its nest in the mid-



dle of tall cacti and produces a rattling, screaming sound, throwing its head back onto its back while calling.

While these birds are a beautiful sight to behold, it is very important to keep your distance and respect their habitats. This is how we protect our wildlife. By admiring the beauty of Aruba in a safe and respectful manner, we can do our part in protecting our sacred nature.

Photo Credit: Aruba Birdlife Conservation □



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A guide for the perfect picture: Where to find the most Instagrammable places in Aruba

(Oranjestad)—Imagine, you're out and about on the island and you want to take the most picture-perfect photo to show your friends and family back home and online. It seems like the perfect spot can be hard to find, but Aruba is full of great spots for a quick snapshot! Here are the most Instagrammable places in Aruba.

Wooden Swing on Plaza Daniel Leo

While you're in Mainstreet Oranjestad, check out the wooden swing on Plaza Daniel Leo. This is another favorite among visitors wanting a cute snapshot for Instagram.

Since you've made it this far, one question: How many blue horses have you spotted already?

Mangel Halto

For a different take on beach photos, we definitely recommend Mangel



Halto! You can get in the water right by the roots of these beautiful trees (please be careful not to climb them, though!). You will see beautiful skies, birds and other wildlife, and among the greenery of the mangroves, your picture is sure to pop!

Yacht Dock in Oranjestad

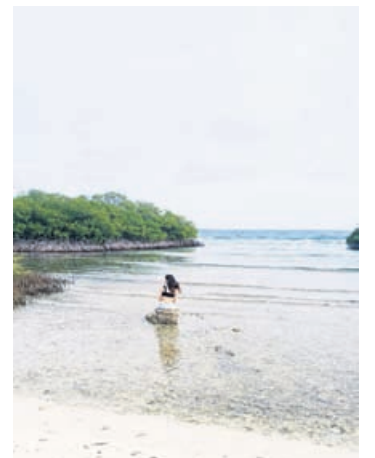
Last but certainly not least, the Yacht Dock in Oranjestad is the perfect spot to take a beautiful picture, especially at sunset. The dock is located behind the Wilhelmina Park. This spot offers a gorgeous view of the

ocean and sunset, accompanied by the soft waves crashing on the shoreline. You may even spot some iguanas!

"I LOVE ARUBA"

While you're in the area, check out the 'I LOVE ARUBA' sign is a great first stop for a quick shot with the family. This spot is among the few that has become a favorite among tourists, especially those that are visiting Aruba through a cruise vacation.

Speaking of giant signs that read "Aruba" (because there can never be too



many), there is another sign you can find along the Linear Park. It may be a long walk from the harbor to get there, but while you're at it, check out these other spots along the way! □



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. □



Place names in San Nicolas and their origins

(Oranjestad)—If you're ever taking a tour of Aruba, San Nicolas would definitely be on your itinerary. From relaxing on the white, sandy beaches of Baby and Roger's Beach, to exploring the prehistoric caves of Quadirikiri and Fontein, you are taking in a full view of what San Nicolas has to offer. But did you know that you are also passing through areas whose names have historical origins? Here are a few place names in San Nicolas and their origin story.

Sero Colorado

On your way to Baby or Roger's Beach, you'll pass by the famous Red Anchor at what was once the entrance to the Colony residential community and be greeted with red soiled hills by the coast. This is Sero Colorado. Named after the 30-meter, deep red, limestone hill, "Sero Colorado" translates to "Colored Hill". Sero Colorado has deep historical ties with the once-thriving phosphate industry in the area. Matter of fact,



there are still underground shafts and passages deep in Sero Colorado from the time of phosphate mining. In 1958, the refinery at the time, Lago, adopted this name for the residential section of its employees.

Vader Piet

Another well visited area, Vader Piet is located in the Arikok National Park. Rec-

ognizable sites within this area include the Wind Mills and the Quadirikiri Cave. The origin of this name is part historical and speculation, as there are slight deviations from what actually happened.

In 1829, Pieter Lampe was a planter and the person responsible for governing this remote area. As the story

goes, Pieter was well known and beloved for his kindness and good treatment of his employees, and was therefore also called Vader Piet (Father Piet). However, he was tragically murdered—some speculate at the hands of a slave. For his work and good heart, the area was named after him.

San Nicolas

Of course we can't forget San Nicolas itself. Much like Vader Piet, the origin of the name San Nicolas has so far two different accounts. In the literal sense, "San Nicolas" translates to "Saint Nicolas", leading many to believe that this district was named after a Spanish saint. Though one account does support this with the theory that the district was named after the saint by Spanish colonizers, the other account is much less divine, but does refer to an influential figure in the area.

Nicolaas van der Biest was a successful landowner during the time of the phosphate boom in late 19th century Aruba. Back then, landowners (most, if not all of them men) were referred to as "Shon" by their subordinates. So, the district was originally named after Shon Nicolaas. Over time, the name evolved into what is now San Nicolas. □

Source: "Aruba: Short History" by Dr. J. Hartog

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use



ORANJESTAD—Though western medicine is now widely used for common illnesses and to keep our bodies healthy and happy, it is still very common in every household in Aruba (and around the world) to have staple home remedies that is passed on through generations. Here are some tips that our elders have passed on to us over the years.

Pineapple

Pineapple has more uses than topping it on your Christmas ham. According to elders, the skin of a pineapple is great to use to refresh your body. Clean the skin thoroughly and make tea or warapa* with it. It is said that this tea can also be drank after an operation on the ovaries or uterus. This gets rid of irritation and inflammation.

Arrowroot

Arrowroot is native to trop-

ical America and can be sold as a powder or whole. It is said that you can take arrowroot powder and make a "shalup" (porridge) for stomach pain or when you're feeling weak. You can make it with milk too, but it is advised to best use just water. You can also add prunes for a bit of sweetness. Arrowroot shalup is also good to treat an unhealthy gut or for diarrhea.

To make arrowroot shalup, boil a bit of water and add one tablespoon of arrowroot powder and stir continuously until you reach porridge consistency. If you make a shalup with milk, add a pinch of salt. Raw arrowroot powder can be used to powder babies.

Eggplant/Aubergine

Eggplants, or aubergines, are easy to find in supermarkets around the world

and can be grown all year round on the island. Related to potato and tomato, eggplants are good to calm nerves. It can also be used to lower blood pressure, by steeping its leaves in boiled water and drinking it. You can also make eggplant juice to help purify your blood. However, do make sure to drink slowly; let it mix with your spit and then swallow.

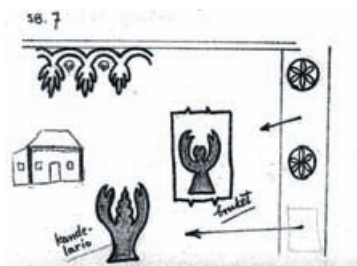
Eggplant kataplan* can also be used to treat skin tumors, abscesses and hemorrhoids. Eggplant kataplan can also be used externally to treat arthritis. □

*warapa: term referring to a water and sugar solution, a.k.a simple syrup.

*kataplan: porridge-like mixture used externally for wounds or parts of the body that are painful or swollen.



Cas Floria: The Decorated Houses of Aruba



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

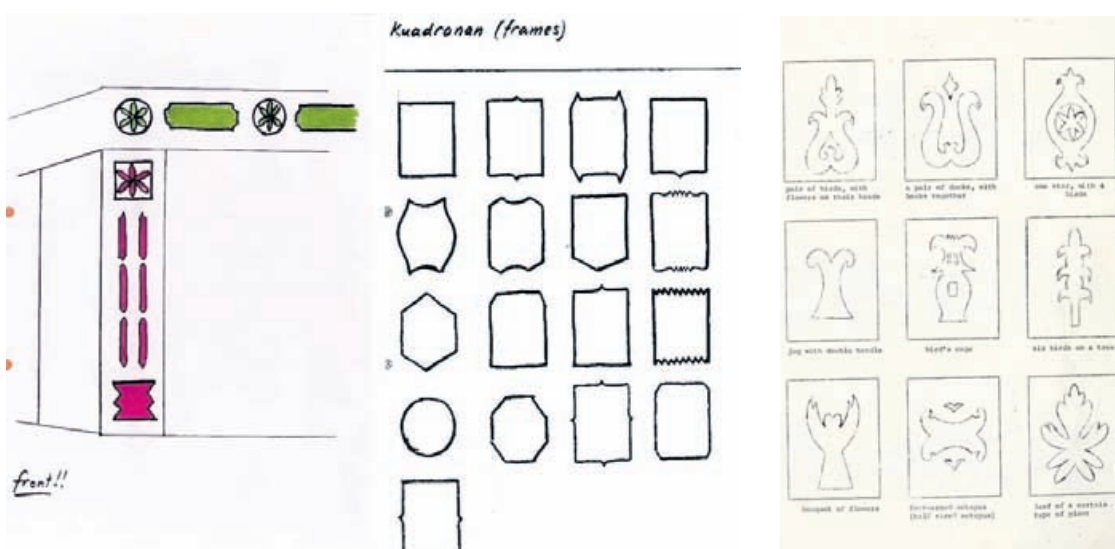
These houses can be found everywhere, in nearly every district of Aruba. People always thought that these designs came from an Indigenous culture; possibly, the star design resembled the way it was shown, similar to the "God Sun" of the Indigenous people. However, the history of this decorative system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

In his book *Millefiori di Aruba*, Father Nooyen declares that the first house to receive this type of decoration was the home of Mr. Bernardo Eman Croes in Pos Chikito. Julien (Janchi) Christiaans and Gregorio (Goy) Semeleer built this house in 1920 and created the decorations on the upper corners of the house. Other people in Pos Chikito, who saw this beautiful work, also wanted their houses decorated in the same way.

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

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

This was the first house in



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

Even today, the patterns are well preserved and protected, but they are no longer used.

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

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

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

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

After comparing his information, Ito Tromp wrote that Hartog was right concerning the period when decorated houses began in Aruba in 1820. However,

it was not people from Curaçao who started it. Victor Tromp, who was 87 years old at the time of writing, was a member of Janchi Wolff's family.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Drift onto the beach
- 7 Parting tool
- 11 Texas city
- 12 Lotion ingredient
- 13 Talked at length
- 15 Twin of Romulus
- 16 Docking spot
- 18 Go by
- 21 Tadpole's home
- 22 Continuing story
- 24 Under the weather
- 25 Buck's mate
- 26 Carnival city
- 27 Prepared potatoes
- 29 Dis-patched
- 30 Cease
- 31 Euro division
- 32 Fighting
- 34 Applied liberally
- 40 Singly
- 41 "Raging Bull" star
- 42 Fencing sword
- 43 Put on, as a play

DOWN

- 1 Spider's home
- 2 Completely
- 3 Mud bath setting
- 4 Enmity
- 5 Theater worker
- 6 Ode or ballade
- 7 Roman ruler
- 8 Archaic
- 9 Cow call
- 10 Writer Jonson
- 14 Indian coin
- 16 Magnet ends
- 17 Cove
- 19 Ambulance sound

A	L	O	H	A		V	O	C	A	L
C	A	R	O	L		A	W	A	K	E
T	H	E	M	E		S	E	P	I	A
			E	R	A	S		E	N	D
C	L	A	P	T	R	A	P			
H	A	L	L		F	L	E	E	T	S
A	T	B	A	T		S	T	R	O	P
N	E	A	T	E	N		R	I	T	A
			E	M	O	T	I	C	O	N
R	I	B		P	R	O	D			
I	D	E	A	L		N	I	E	C	E
F	L	A	R	E		I	S	L	A	M
T	E	N	T	S		C	H	I	P	S

- 20 Virtuous fellow
- 21 Card spot
- 22 Lawn starter
- 23 Place to park
- 25 Ocean measure
- 28 Despise
- 29 Venus's sister
- 31 Insertion sign
- 33 Ties the knot
- 34 Look upon
- 35 Pet perch
- 36 One in a hand
- 37 Really enjoy
- 38 Mine rock
- 39 Silent assent

1	2	3	4	5	6		7	8	9	10
11							12			
13							14			
			15							
	16	17					18		19	20
21						22				23
24				25				26		
27			28				29			
	30						31			
			32		33					
34	35	36						37	38	39
40						41				
42						43				

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.

4-4

CRYPTOQUOTE

YDKL HAZ XRR PRWAGR HAZ, FH
WGMRTQ, MX LDR GRXZCL AW
K CMWRLMFR AW IDAIACKLR.

— BKLDKGMTR DRJPZGT

Cryptoquote: ONE DAY THE LITTLE RABBIT HEARD THE BOY TELL HIS NANNY THAT HE WAS REAL. HE WAS OVERCOME BY LOVE IN HIS HEART. — "THE VELVETEEN RABBIT"

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Electrical power

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

Drinking water



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

Supermarket hours

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

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the



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

CRUISE SHIP	
AUGUST SCHEDULE	
02 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
04 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
05 WED	FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E
09 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 Berth: E
11 TUE	GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: B ADVENTURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CARNIVAL VISTA Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
12 WED	ALLURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I FREEWINDS Arrival: 6:00 Departure: Berth: E
16 SUN	FREEWINDS DEPT. Arrival: Departure: 24:00 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★★★

7/31

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

7/30

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Inequality best predicts how nations handle pandemics: study

Paris, France

Economic inequality is the clearest way to predict how countries will fare during a pandemic, a high-profile panel said Wednesday, calling for a rethink in how governments prepare for the next global health crisis.

The research, which was published in a prestigious journal and will be presented at a major AIDS conference in Brazil, pushed back against traditional measures of pandemic preparedness.

"For decades the world judged how ready a country is for a pandemic by counting its laboratories, stockpiles and response plans," study co-author and economics Nobel laureate Joseph Stiglitz said.

"This research shows that this is not enough," he added in a statement. "High economic inequality can leave even wealthy, well-equipped nations dangerously exposed."

The United States and United Kingdom topped pandemic preparedness indexes, yet during the Covid-19 pandemic both recorded significantly more cases and deaths than the global average.

Brazil and South Africa, considered the most prepared countries in their regions, also fared particularly badly.

However, countries with lower levels of inequality considered to be less prepared such as Vietnam, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Uruguay and Norway were significantly better off, the research said.

The new paper, published in the New England Journal of Medicine, found no association between a country's technical capacity for example labs to test for viruses or trained emergency healthcare workers and



UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima speaks during the opening ceremony of the 26th International AIDS Conference in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on July 27, 2026.

how well it handled the Covid and AIDS pandemics.

However it found a clear and consistent link between a nation's level of economic inequality and how it performed during both crises.

- 'Not inevitable' -

"The deeper the inequality in the country is, the deeper that pandemic is going to be," lead study author Matthew Kavanagh of Georgetown University in the US told AFP.

"We're not talking about reaching utopia we're talking about what would it look like for the whole

world to reach the level of inequality of South Korea." Stiglitz said that "the encouraging news is that inequality is not inevitable it is the result of policy choices, and we know how to change them."

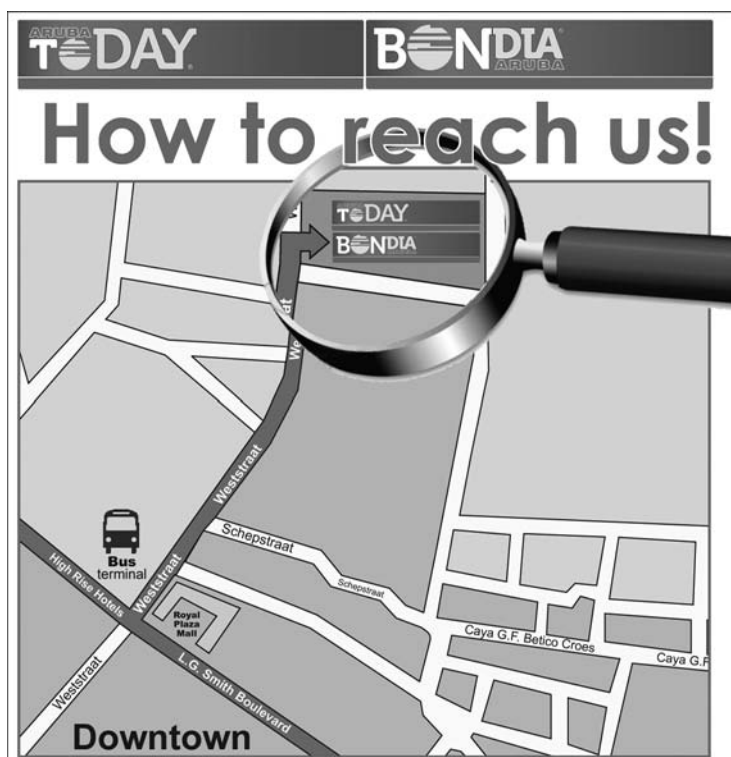
The panel urged nations to consider "inequality-informed pandemic preparedness".

This included social protections such as paid sick leave, unemployment support and cash transfers in times of crisis.

During pandemics, this money can mean people are able to stay home "without having to worry: am I going to be able to

feed my family?" Kavanagh explained.

The researchers called for low-income countries to receive debt relief when a pandemic is declared. □



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Oranjestad: del Pueblo
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San Nicolas: Seroe Preto
Tel. 584 4833

OTHER

Dental Clinic	587 9850
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Urgent Care	586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic	588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police	100
Police Oranjestad	527 3140
Police Noord	527 3200
Police Sta. Cruz	527 2900
Police San Nicolas	584 5000
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A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952

Narcotics Anonymous
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Against Domestic Violence(FCVR)
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Centre for Diabetes
Tel. 524 8888

Child Abuse Prevention
Tel. 582 4433

Quota Club Tel. 525 2672

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South Korea's women web sleuths fight AI deepfake porn

Seoul, South Korea

Under banners emblazoned "Solidarity" and "We stand together with victims", a group of South Korean women digital detectives dredges the internet for a scourge of illegal AI-enabled pornography. South Korea home to the world's leading smartphone and memory chip-makers takes huge national pride in its tech prowess. But the success story has a dark side: women suffer rampant "digital sex crimes", rights groups say. Spycams film them in private while chat groups blackmail them for explicit content and share so-called "revenge porn" without consent.

AI-generated deepfakes are the newest threat. Using the generative technology and a picture of their victim's face, harassers can fabricate invasive pornographic images portraying their targets.

At the National Center for Digital Sexual Crime Response housed in an airy Seoul office 23 women are tasked with turning the tide, trawling the web and filing delete requests backed by threats of legal action.

Last year, the group pulled down 318 , 000 videos and photos deepfakes, spycam content and inti-



The photo taken on July 2, 2026 shows the head of the National Center for Digital Sexual Crime Response Kim Mi-Soon speaking during an interview with AFP in Seoul.

mate imagery shared without consent on behalf of 10,600 people, 75 percent of whom were women and girls.

"South Korea acted faster than others because not only digital sex crimes became common earlier than elsewhere, but also women spoke out against them just as quickly and vigorously," Kim Mi-Soon, the head of the government-founded centre, told AFP.

- Deepfake deluge -

The centre opened in 2018, a year that saw tens of

thousands of women demand action through anti-spycam protests.

The organisation's headquarters and 17 regional hubs also offer counselling and legal advice and collect evidence for prosecutions.

One 33-year-old woman, who asked to be identified only by her surname Kim, said she had deepfakes shared in 2024 on encrypted apps beyond the reach of the centre's specialists.

"The centre may not be perfect, but it can make a huge difference for victims

going through this nightmare alone," she said.

Kim, a member of the military, said she felt "healed" by their support -- including financial aid to secure a trauma diagnosis for court evidence.

"It gave me a huge sense of relief and solace," she said.

"Navigating the whole legal procedure alone while suffering trauma would have been impossible."

Digital sex crimes are proving a mutable menace. In 2020, the "Nth Room" scandal revealed men

were exploiting dozens of women and girls they called "slaves" in pay-to-view "sextortion" chatrooms.

Since the 46-person national response centre was founded, sexual deepfakes have become the new trend.

Between 2019 and 2023, global deepfake circulation surged 550 percent, according to web safety firm Security Hero.

Nearly 98 percent of content was AI-generated pornography of women, with more than half the victims in South Korean, according to company research.

K-pop stars are main targets, but ordinary women are increasingly ensnared in a country where police data show digital sex crimes account for 40 percent of all sexual offences. "Since last year, we've seen more and more deepfakes of ordinary women and girls with the images becoming way more sophisticated than before and victims getting younger and younger," said deletion specialist Kim Yun-hee. The centre uses its own AI tools, including a monitoring system capable of detecting exploitative material and messages targeting children. □

Musk's X adds banking in 'everything app' push

Washington, United States

Elon Musk's social media app X on Monday began offering its X Money banking service to all US subscribers of its paid Premium and Premium+ tiers, part of the multi-billionaire's ambition to turn the site into an "everything app."

The rollout widens access to a product that had been available since late June as a test to a limited group of top-tier subscribers.

X Money lets users hold deposits, send peer-to-peer payments, pay bills, transfer money by wire, and mail checks without leaving the X app.

Deposits are held at Cross River Bank, a New Jersey-

based lender that is used by several financial-technology apps, and are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) up to \$250,000.

Musk has said for years that he wants X to resemble China's WeChat.

WeChat, a single app for messaging, shopping and payments, is a pillar of con-

sumer spending in China.

A post by X Money said deposits would earn an annual percentage yield of up to six percent.

This was well above the roughly four to five percent offered by the most competitive US high-yield savings accounts and far above the near-zero rates at large traditional banks. Premium+ subscribers can earn the top rate directly, while Premium users must meet direct-deposit requirements, according to the company.

Cross River described the launch as the first government-insured banking platform in the United States built on a social net-

work.

The launch positions X to compete with established payment apps such as PayPal's Venmo, Block's Cash App and SoFi, drawing on the app's user base of millions.

Ahead of its launch, the service drew scrutiny in Washington.

In an April 14 letter, Senator Elizabeth Warren, the top Democrat on the Senate Banking Committee, pressed Musk on how X Money would "generate revenue sufficient to pay that yield."

She also cited past FDIC enforcement actions against Cross River over lending practices. □



A picture taken on November 11, 2021 in Moscow shows the logo of mobile messaging service WeChat on a tablet screen.

'Thrilled' 76ers sign James with eyes on NBA title run

New York, United States

LeBron James has signed a contract to play for the Philadelphia 76ers, the team announced Monday, with managing owner Josh Harris "thrilled" about chances for their first NBA title since 1983.

James announced on Friday he would play for the Sixers on a two-year deal worth \$8 million, ending a weeks-long mystery over the 41-year-old superstar's future, but the 76ers had no comment throughout the weekend.

"I am thrilled to welcome LeBron James to the Philadelphia 76ers," ownership managing partner Harris said in a statement. "One of the greatest players in NBA history and one of the best athletes ever, his accomplishments are iconic."

James, the NBA's all-time scoring leader set to begin his record 24th campaign in October, is a four-time NBA champion and four-time NBA Most Valuable Player.

After winning two titles with Miami, another with hometown club Cleveland and his most recent with the Los Angeles Lakers in 2020, James could become the first NBA player to win crowns with four different teams.

James, a three-time Olympic champion and 22-time



USA's #06 LeBron James celebrates his team's victory after winning the men's Gold Medal basketball match between France and USA during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at the Bercy Arena in Paris on August 10, 2024.

NBA All-Star, joins a Sixers roster filled with NBA stars in hopes of bringing Philadelphia an NBA title for the first time since Julius Erving led the club to the crown 43 years ago.

"I cannot wait to see LeBron alongside Jaylen Brown, VJ Edgecombe, Joel Embiid, Tyrese Maxey, and our talented roster as we work to deliver a championship for Philly," Harris said.

"To LeBron and his family: we are grateful you chose the 76ers, and look forward to this next chapter of your legendary career. Wel-

come to the 76ers!"

James has career averages of 26.8 points, 7.5 rebounds, 7.4 assists and 1.5 steals over 1,622 games.

- 'Ultimate competitor' -

Philadelphia 76ers president of basketball operations Mike Gansey, an Ohio high school rival of James on the court, expects the legend will boost the club and the community.

"There's no doubt LeBron is one of the greatest players to ever play the game of basketball and there are no words to measure the

impact he'll have on this organization," Gansey said. "I've had the pleasure of knowing LeBron since high school and have seen the high-level impact he has produced at every stop of his basketball journey. He is a consummate professional, the ultimate competitor, and a tireless worker.

"But he's also an incredible person with natural leadership traits, a family man, and someone who possesses unwavering commitment to community and those around him. We couldn't be happier that he's officially

here."

The 76ers posted a photo on social media of a James jersey, keeping his tradition number 23 with his new club, hanging in a locker with a crown on a shelf inside it, a nod toward "King James" being with the Sixers.

James has taken teams into the NBA playoffs 19 times, matching a league record, with post-season averages of 28.2 points, 8.9 rebounds, 7.2 assists, 1.7 steals and 1.0 blocked shots over 302 games.

In June, James announced he was leaving the Lakers and numerous clubs were seen as contenders to become his new home, including Miami, Cleveland, Golden State and Minnesota as well as the 76ers.

Philadelphia swung a deal with Boston three weeks ago for Brown, sending Paul George to the Celtics, and together with center Embiid and top guards Maxey and Edgecombe they provided a lineup too good for James to pass up in his quest for a fifth NBA title.

"I believe I can help make the Philadelphia 76ers a championship team and I am so excited to energize a new fan base and start this incredible journey one last time," James posted on X Friday. □

Formula One engines to change again in 2027

Paris, France

Formula One bosses have responded to the criticism of this season's power unit modifications by agreeing to "further evolutionary changes" before a revamp for the 2027 season, the FIA announced on Friday.

Motorsport's governing body said that an agreement had been reached "in principle" between the 11 team bosses and five power unit manufacturers to restore the primacy of combustion power over electric power as early as 2027.

"The measures agreed in principle today for 2027 would see a nominal increase in internal combustion engine power by 50 kilowatts with a fuel-flow

increase and a nominal reduction of the energy recovery system deployment power by 50 kilowatts," the FIA said in a statement. This decision, which still has to be discussed in detail let alone approved, would in effect put an end to the 50/50 parity in hybrid engines — half electric, half combustion — introduced this season by the FIA.

The new regulations have created exciting racing for viewers but have met with a varied reception from the drivers with four-time Max Verstappen describing it as "Formula E on steroids" and hinting he might step away from Formula One if it did not change.

The 50/50 system involves a complex management of the battery during overtakes and then during the necessary recharging of electrical energy when slowing down and braking.

This has triggered safety concerns, notably when Oliver Bearman had a dramatic crash at the Japan GP as he closed on Alpine's Franco Colapinto.

The significant difference in speed between the two cars as a result of their contrasting states of energy deployment led to Bearman taking evasive action and hitting the wall.

Last month, the FIA announced a new "adjusted" version of the regulation which came into play at last



Mercedes' Italian driver Kimi Antonelli races during the 2026 Miami Formula One Grand Prix at Miami International Autodrome in Miami Gardens, Florida, on May 3, 2026.

weekend's Miami GP. Friday's meeting gave the thumbs up to the modifications, saying they had improved competition and were a "step in the right di-

rection".

The FIA said they would look at "further adjustments at future events", possibly as soon as the next grand prix in Canada on May 24. □



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UEFA says will boycott World Cup if FIFA pushes private investor proposal

Paris, France

European football's governing body UEFA said Thursday it would boycott the World Cup should FIFA press ahead with its private investor plan.

"No UEFA national teams will participate in any FIFA competition for so long as these proposals remain alive, unless this proposal has been abandoned in its entirety and binding assurances have been given that FIFA will never again open its governance or competitions to private ownership," UEFA said in a statement.

"The World Cup cannot be treated as an investment product... No part of it should ever be surrendered to private investors. The World Cup is not for sale."

FIFA, football's world governing body, on Tuesday

announced plans to create a commercial subsidiary to run its biggest events, such as the World Cup and Club World Cup.

Under the proposal, private investors would be allowed to acquire stakes in the company but would remain minority shareholders, FIFA said.

The governing body hopes to raise up to \$4.2 billion based on a valuation of \$20 billion for the FIFA Forward Enterprise

(FFE) initiative.

If approved, the project could provide each of FIFA's 211 member associations with a one-off payment of \$20 million in early 2027 and increase their funding allocation for the 2027-2030 cycle from \$8 million to \$20 million.

FIFA president Gianni Infantino on Wednesday described the initiative as a "golden opportunity to turbocharge the development of the game globally".

But UEFA, whose president Aleksander Ceferin boycotted the World Cup final to show unhappiness with FIFA, argued that "this model has no place in world football".

"Football's future cannot be dictated by the expectations of those whose first duty is to maximise financial return. □



FIFA President Gianni Infantino (L) and CONCACAF President Victor Montagliani attend the 2026 World Cup football tournament quarter-final match between Norway and England at Miami Stadium in Miami on July 11, 2026.