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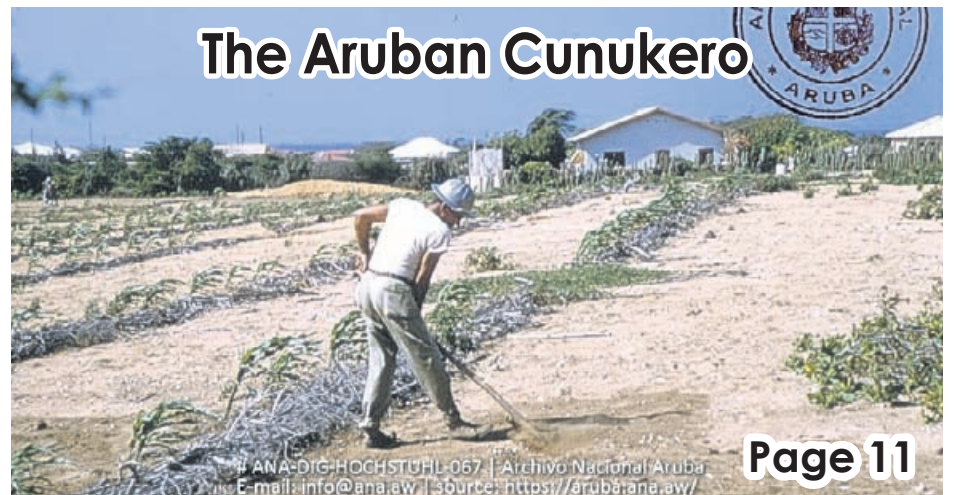
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The White House logo is seen in the James S. Brady Press Briefing Room at the White House in Washington, DC, on September 19, 2026.

Judge urged to lift Trump's White House ban on media outlets

Washington, United States

A lawyer for CNN, MS NOW and Politico urged a U.S. federal judge on Wednesday to immediately restore White House access for the news organizations after President Donald Trump abruptly revoked their credentials.

District Judge Timothy Kelly declined to issue an immediate decision after a nearly one-hour court hearing but told lawyers for the media outlets and the government he would rule "as soon as I can."

CNN, MS NOW and Politico went to court after Trump on Friday ordered that they be barred from the White House as punishment for distributing what he called "fake news" and "fiction and lies."

The news organizations filed a lawsuit asking for a temporary restraining order against the ban on the grounds that it violates the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which upholds the right to a free press.

The Department of Justice responded with a court filing that said Trump can "control reporters' access to restricted presidential areas, such as the Oval Office."

"Access to the White House is a privilege not a right," it said.

In an accompanying letter to CNN, the White House Press Office accused the cable news network of "trafficking in verifiable falsehoods about national security and other issues, and publishing sensitive or classified information."

Similar accusations were leveled against MS NOW and Politico.

The letter to CNN cited several stories about the Iran war and a story on Trump's plans to build a military bunker below the planned East Wing ballroom which allegedly "disclosed 'top-secret' construction details."

Theodore Boutros, representing the media outlets in court on Wednesday, told the judge that in his Truth Social post on Friday announcing the bans on CNN, MS NOW and Politico, Trump "didn't say anything about national security."

"All of a sudden this is a national security case," Boutros said.

"The idea that reporters could be punished by the government simply for reporting on national security issues... that the government would rather have not be reported on is just contrary to First Amendment principles," he added.

- 'Trump TV' -

Journalists for the three news organizations were denied access to the White House grounds on Saturday and had their passes confiscated in the latest flare-up of the 80-year-old Republican president's years-long assault on the mainstream US media.

In a previous case involving CNN during Trump's first term, Kelly, a Trump appointee, ordered the White House to temporarily restore the White House access for a CNN reporter whose pass had been revoked.

In a rare move, the top five U.S. broadcasters said on Monday that they were halting pool coverage of the White House -- where a broadcaster films on behalf of all television outlets for the day in solidarity with CNN.

"The public has a vital interest in receiving accurate, independent information about its government. No administration should restrict a news organization because it objects to its reporting," ABC, CBS, CNN, Fox and NBC said.

On Tuesday, Trump appeared to suggest that CNN should not be covering him outside of the White House too.

"I'm surprised that CNN is here covering me. □



Texas protesters demand safety amid U.S. immigration raids

Pflugerville, United States

With her cheeks painted as the flags of Guatemala and Mexico to honor her parents, 16-year-old Estella joined students protesting immigration raids Tuesday after the weekend shooting of a Venezuelan man in Austin, Texas. Born in the United States, Estella said she is making noise for her parents and other immigrants who have been silenced by fear under President Donald Trump's harsh anti-immigration policies.

"I'm here and I'm glad to be their voice," she told AFP. She joined about 100 high school students from the Pflugerville school district in central Texas, to protest the recent shooting of DoorDash delivery driver Wilber Garcés Perez and chant slogans against U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

ICE has been using "way too much force," Estella said, calling it "unnecessary."

"They even shot a man trying to do his job like, deliver something. And I think it's unfair."

Garcés Perez was shot and wounded by ICE agents on Sunday, and despite being transported to a hospital twice to care for the wound, as of Tuesday he remained jailed in a detention center with the bullet still inside his body, his lawyer said.

US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials, who oversee ICE, said Tuesday on X "ICE does not and would not advise" on hospital medical procedures, denying their role in his treatment.

The shooting is the latest violent incident that has drawn protests against ICE, which has conducted raids around the country with masked agents and unmarked cars as part of Trump's campaign promise to curb illegal immigration.

DHS reports 51,000 undocumented people were arrested in the US in August.

- Bullet in back -

The lawyer for Garcés Perez, Kate Lincoln-Goldfinch, said Tuesday that "he's still in a lot of pain, the bullet is still lodged in his body."

"We have filed a federal lawsuit and the judge has ordered that he be present at the first hearing, which is scheduled for Wednesday, September 30th, and that means he won't be deported," she said.

The ICE agent who shot Garcés Perez was not wearing a body camera, Lincoln-Goldfinch added.

Garcés Perez told reporters by phone Monday that the bullet fractured his collarbone and was lodged near his spine, adding that it had not been removed despite his objections.

Federal agent violence against Latino men in the United States has alarmed many in the community. □

AI political ads warp reality ahead of U.S. midterms

Washington, United States

A political ad depicts a U.S. Senate hopeful remarking on God and gender while scrawling in a Bible with a crayon. But he never filmed the clip: it is yet another AI-generated video pushed by a rival ahead of the mid-term elections.

AI-created ads placing politicians in fictitious situations have proliferated ahead of the November elections, a largely unregulated form of political communication that is increasingly being adopted despite a broader backlash against the technology.

Earlier this month, Republican Senate nominee in Texas, Ken Paxton, posted an AI-generated ad on X depicting his Democratic rival James Talarico saying: "Look, I always think of myself as a Christian who hates Christianity."

The lifelike clip shows Talarico writing "let there be six genders" in a Bible with multicolored crayons. Overlaid text reads: "James Talarico wrong for Texas" and "wrong for America," while a QR code seeks donations for Paxton.

Talarico condemned the ad, saying "they are lying about a candidate in this race" and that he favored a ban on deepfakes in political campaigns.

"These AI deepfake ads don't add anything to our



Democratic candidate for U.S. Senate James Talarico speaks during a rally in Houston, Texas, on September 13, 2026.

civic discourse," he told NBC News. "They don't do anything to elucidate the choice that's in front of voters." The ad came a few weeks after a conservative nonprofit aligned with President Donald Trump released another AI clip depicting Talarico parodying Julie Andrews's character in the hit classic Sound of Music, dressed in a jumper-style bodice and skirt and singing "My favorite things."

- 'Erodes trust' -

The proliferation of AI ads in U.S. federal, state and local elections comes against the backdrop of declining

trust in the technology.

"The concern might be not that people believe the ads but the ads and general AI slop content risk people doubting everything," Sarah Kreps, director of the Tech Policy Institute at Cornell University, told AFP.

"People might just dismiss real content as another deepfake, which erodes trust, causing voters to tune out rather than dig deeper for authenticity."

The Wesleyan Media Project, which tracks election ad spending, has identified at least 164 political ads nationwide so far this year that were "generated or

enhanced through the use of AI." It estimates that the ads cost just under \$80 million.

That tally of ads sponsored by both Republicans and Democrats and splashed across airwaves and social media was an undercount. The group said it was difficult to definitively know whether AI tools had been used in some ads, especially as there were no federal mandates that political ads carry an AI disclaimer.

"Just the knowledge that the tech has become good enough to deceive the average viewer combined with the fact that

it is being used in election communication is enough to undermine voters trust in the broader election communication ecosystem," Ilana Beller, from the nonprofit advocacy group Public Citizen, told AFP.

'Modern political cartoon'

However, cheap and widely available AI tools help save on the often exorbitant costs of producing ads.

"There's no need to pay for a camera crew or hire actors to create good-looking content on a short timeline. They also open the door to creativity no special effects editors required," Isabel Linzer, from the nonpartisan Center for Democracy & Technology, told AFP. In many cases, Linzer said, satirical or humorous AI ads serve as "the modern political cartoon."

"A worthy question is whether using AI in political ads is a stunt that will boost a candidate through generating substantial free media attention," she added. The AI-generated ads could help candidates with goals such as fundraising and mobilizing supporters, but there is scant evidence that they influence how people vote, said Scott Babwah Brennen, director of the Center on Technology Policy at New York University. □

U.S.-backed Board of Peace unveils \$2.5bn Gaza recovery plan

New York, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump's Board of Peace proposed a \$2.45 billion Gaza recovery plan on Wednesday at a meeting of its members and stakeholders, in an effort meant to span over six months. But the presentation in New York comes as world leaders like French President Emmanuel Macron and Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan have taken aim at the humanitarian situation in Gaza this week, calling for action to end the conflict with Israel. Top officials are gathered in the city this week for the U.N. General Assembly.

Hamas militants launched a deadly attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, triggering a massive response. Since then, the Palestinian territory has been devastated by Israeli airstrikes.

Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza of the Board of Peace, urged for backing of its plan.

But he acknowledged that discussions with Israel are not easy ahead of elections in the country, noting that conditions are "more politically sensitive."

"Given the complexity of what we're dealing with, I think we're making, slowly and steadily, progress," he

insisted.

Also present at Wednesday's gathering were Trump's roving envoy Steve

Witkoff and son-in-law Jared Kushner.

The proposal involves 66 projects, covering temporary housing, debris re-

covery and infrastructure like public transport, amid other efforts towards economic recovery.

The plan also envisions demilitarization in Gaza, meaning for Hamas to give up its weapons, and military pullback on the Israeli front.

Despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire in October 2025, Israel has continued its airstrikes and restricted entry of equipment that international groups say is required for the territory's reconstruction to begin. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently said it controls 60 percent of the Gaza Strip. □



Jared Kushner speaks during a Board of Peace open session in New York on September 23, 2026.

Chef Dominique Crenn urges Michelin to recognize more women

Playa del Carmen, Mexico

French-born chef Dominique Crenn, who founded Atelier Crenn in San Francisco in 2011, remains the first and only woman in the United States to hold three Michelin stars.

Now, she wants the restaurant world, and Michelin in particular, to do a better job of recognizing women, who have played a defining role in the culinary arts for millennia.

"There are so many women with incredible talent," Crenn told AFP in an interview during a visit to Mexico, arguing that female chefs often remain overlooked in elite kitchens despite their skills.

"I have the impression that they use the talent of these young women without promoting them," she said.

"I would like Michelin to start recognizing other women."

Globally, only six women have received the coveted three-star distinction in the Michelin Guide's 2026 editions.

Crenn, who was being honored at a food and cultural



French chef Dominique Crenn smiles during an interview with AFP at the Xcaret resort in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo state, Mexico, on September 20, 2026.

festival on Mexico's Riviera Maya, paused between a hectic round of appearances to devour two beef-cheek tacos with salsa verde prepared by Mexican chef Karime Lopez.

"It's delicious!" she exclaimed between bites.

"When I eat it, I have the impression that she is telling

me the story of Mexico, the place where she comes from, and that is important."

- 'Make us think' -

Rebellious, innovative and outspoken, Crenn moves through kitchens with the energy of someone still hungry.

During the interview, she wandered among cooks in Lopez's busy kitchen, sampling sauce from a large spoon and offering her approval.

Dressed in a green jacket, baseball cap and dark glasses, she paused to chat before leaving the room with a small dance.

Her own cooking seeks to provoke reflection as much as pleasure.

"Food nourishes us physically, of course, but it should nourish us as well" intellectually, she said, adding that it should "make us think." That philosophy extends to sustainability.

"If you're in California and you're buying fish from the other side of the world, why?" she asked.

"Use the nearby ocean. Use the products from your environment."

Crenn said she worries about increasingly frequent extreme weather events because of their impact on small producers, whom she considers fundamental to her work.

This year, she noted, El Nino in the Pacific has been disrupting weather patterns.

"We are responsible because we do not take care of nature," she said. "We must become an ecosystem in the way we feed ourselves."

- Love and vulnerability -

Crenn divides her time between her restaurant in San Francisco and a biodynamic, regenerative farm in Sonoma, about an hour north of the city.

Chickens roam the property, where fruits, vegetables, herbs and flowers are grown for Atelier Crenn and Bar Crenn. Two 200-year-old trees provide walnuts.

Whatever is not used is repurposed through fermentation or composting. The farm also serves as a laboratory where members of her team can experiment.

For Crenn, "life is a poem" and cooking for others is an act of love and vulnerability.

Yet retaining three Michelin stars comes with what she describes as enormous pressure.

"Products are very expensive, labor is very, very expensive, and I think cooks must be paid properly," she said.

Her restaurant deliberately remains small, with only nine tables, allowing her to spend time with guests. □

Breakthrough French-language literary star denies AI claims

Paris, France

Breakthrough Canadian-Haitian literary star Thelyson Orelie on Tuesday denied using artificial intelligence to write parts of his book "It Was Either That or Die" after being targeted by accusations from an anonymous online account.

Orelie, a previously unknown writer whose debut is set to appear in more than 20 countries, was accused by an anonymous X

account called "Balance ton Claude" of using the site to produce the novel "almost entirely".

The post, from an account with fewer than 100 followers, went viral and had racked up more than three million views on Tuesday when Orelie spoke to Liberation newspaper in France to deny the allegations.

"I've always loved creat-

ing and writing, I don't see why I would use a machine," the 38-year-old said, adding that he was "in the process of putting together a file" with his publishers "to prove" that he wrote the book himself. He added that he believed the attacks were racially motivated.

Boreal, the Montreal publishing house that originally bought the rights, told AFP it had "taken note of the allegations" and was not "taking them lightly" but added that its confidence in the work remained "intact."

AFP ran the excerpts selected by the "Balance ton Claude" X account through other detectors and obtained differing results.

The verification tool InVID-WeVerify, co-created by AFP, concluded that the

passages were "very likely written by a human."

Seven other detectors (Winston AI, detecting-ai.com, app.its-ai.org, detectgpt.com, isgen.ai, copyleaks.com, ghostbuster.app), also tested by AFP, produced differing assessments, underlining the difficulty in detecting AI-generated text.

One indicated that there was a 100% probability that the passages were produced by an AI (app.its-ai.org/), while two others reached the opposite conclusion (detectgpt.com, isgen.ai).

In the novel, written in the first person, Orelie tells the story of Jonas Dorleon, a history and geography teacher who flees gang violence in Haiti, embarking on a perilous journey through 12 countries to Canada. □





A worker feeds a giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) at the National Zoo of Havana on September 15, 2026.

A Cuban zoo, and its animals, in epic battle for survival

Havana, Cuba

Every day, veterinarians and zookeepers make their way to Cuba's National Zoo by whatever means they can, determined to not abandon the nearly 1,000 animals in their care and help save species at risk of extinction.

Their dedication and food donations are vital to keeping alive an array of rhinos, jaguars and tigers including an extremely rare white tiger in the midst of a severe crisis that has left many Cubans struggling to feed themselves.

Just getting to the reserve situated 20 kilometers (12 miles) from central Havana is a headache for staff, as public transportation has come to a near standstill nine months into a US fuel blockade.

"The workers come by bicycle, pedal scooter or electric motorbike to ensure the animals have food and water every day," said Yoel Machado, the zoo's animal welfare manager. Their efforts are about more than keeping the animals fed.

The 345-hectare (850-acre) park serves as a genetic reserve of international conservation importance, housing breeding populations of vulnerable or endangered species, includ-

ing black and white rhinos, hippos and jaguars.

Yet the same crisis that has left workers scrambling to source meat, medicine and water has forced the zoo to curb reproduction programs and increasingly rely on handouts to sustain its animals.

During a recent visit by AFP, two Bengal tiger cubs, one an extremely rare white specimen, frolicked in their enclosure beneath the watchful gaze of their mother, oblivious to the strenuous efforts made to keep them alive.

AFP did not see any animals that appeared malnourished or ill, but Angel Cordero, the veterinarian in charge of big cats, said the tiger cubs "could be in better shape."

He revealed he needed to ration their food to prevent it from running out.

"It's no use giving them plenty if it only lasts three days," he said.

Big cats need about seven kilograms (15 pounds) of meat per day per adult, but such quantities are hard to come by.

Even when it is available, recurring blackouts of up to 30 hours at a stretch make it difficult to preserve.

With fuel extremely scarce, there's also the issue of

how to distribute food in a nature reserve the size of New York's Central Park.

- 23 days without power -

For now, private donors have come to the rescue for the zoo's various needs. Every Monday, Ana Fernandez, a Cuban-American woman born in Tennessee who has been living in Cuba for nine years, donates meat.

"The animals shouldn't have to suffer," the 50-year-old said, though she added that "some days it's not enough for all of them."

Recently, the reserve went 23 days without electricity, which meant it also lacked running water.

The staff "didn't just sit around waiting for things to fall from the sky," the zoo's director Juan Carlos Corella said.

"We looked for solutions, water trucks were brought in, and we found food for the animals almost daily," he said, while admitting that keeping the park open has become "very difficult."

An exodus of vets has added to the zoo's woes.

More than a third have left for better-paying jobs elsewhere, mostly in Cuba's burgeoning private sector. Some wait tables in cafes while others work for private veterinary clinics. □



Women along with their child wait for a health checkup at a mobile boat clinic on the banks of the Brahmaputra River in the Mukalmua village of Assam's Nalbari district on September 19, 2026.

Mobile boat clinics bring healthcare to India's remote islands

Nalbāri, India

An infant lets out a feeble cry as a doctor administers a routine but vital injection aboard a mobile boat clinic, part of a network serving remote riverine communities in northeastern India.

Hundreds of thousands of people in Assam state, criss-crossed by the Brahmaputra river, live on "chars", or temporary river islands and sandbars where access to even basic healthcare can be a challenge.

More than 2,000 such islands dot the state where there are limited health facilities, most "with little or no manpower", according to the local government.

But the network of mobile boat clinics has brought doctors, medicines, vaccines and basic laboratory services to 13 districts across the state.

For thousands of villagers on these remote islands many prone to flooding and erosion the clinics provide a vital link to healthcare.

"We are totally dependent on the boat clinic," said Rekibul Amin, a resident of the Barballa river island in Nalbāri district, which has no medical facilities at all.

"Whatever medicines people receive here, they get them through the boat clinic," Amin said, adding that women in particular had "benefited greatly".

An initiative of non-profit The Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, the "Akha" Assamese for "hope" boat network was launched in 2005.

It has expanded to 15 boats, with support from authorities and UNICEF, now serving roughly 20,000 people a month, according to the UN agency.

Maternal and infant health are the main areas of focus, in a bid to help reduce mortality rates that exceed that national average.

Despite significant gains in recent years, infant and maternal mortality rates continue to languish in Assam, a state of more than 30 million people.

According to official figures, the state has an average of 29 infant deaths and 34 under-five deaths per 1,000 live births, compared with national rates of 24 and 28 deaths, respectively. Maternal deaths in Assam stood at 125 per 100,000 live births as against 88 nationally.

"Mainly, we are targeting the pregnant women who need the antenatal care checkup and the newborn babies who need the routine immunisation," said Habibul Hoque, medical officer at a boat clinic serving Nalbāri.

"We are very happy to serve the people of these 'char' areas," he said, where poverty and illiteracy are some of the barriers to healthcare access. □

Mongolian herders enlist new tech against harsher, drier climate

IChoyr, Mongolia

When Mongolian herder Ganchimeg's sheep strayed dangerously near a salty lake this summer, driven by hunger as nearby vegetation was poor, she was in a "total panic".

"If they drank or stepped into it, the whole flock would be destroyed," she told AFP outside her traditional ger, the tent's shape silhouetted on the vast horizon of the Gobi Desert.

But thanks to an app helping herders navigate the risks that climate change is bringing to Mongolia, her husband was able to reach the sheep before they drank the brackish water.

"He immediately rushed over at top speed and intercepted them," said Ganchimeg, a mother of four who, like many Mongolians, goes by just one name.

"If we hadn't used that GPS tracker, we might have lost our entire flock."

Herders are on the frontline of both climate change and desertification impacts climate change is bringing extreme weather, including deadly cold snaps and droughts, which compound desertification caused by overgrazing.

Huge and sparsely populated, Mongolia is disproportionately affected by



In this photo taken on August 25, 2026 sheep herder Ganchimeg stands with goats she rounded up in Bayantal, Mongolia's Govisumber province.

human-driven climate change, threatening the country's nomadic population and livestock.

Bilgudei Gankhulug, the 26-year-old founder of the Hunu app used by Ganchimeg, told AFP he was inspired to help herders after a 2024 "dzud" an extreme weather event that brought temperatures as low as minus 45C.

"Over eight million livestock died. I saw a lot of herders losing their income, losing their livelihoods in just the span of a few months," said Bilgudei.

Meaning "strong nomad", the name Hunu "embodies our mission of empowering nomadic herders with the help of technology," he said.

- 'Strong nomad' -

The app allows nomads to track their livestock with a solar-charging GPS device attached to one animal per group sufficient for herds that tend to stick together on the spacious steppe.

It has an artificial intelligence-powered weather feature with updates on the

deadly dust storms and blizzards made more common in recent years by climate change, which scientists say is intensifying globally. The app also compiles useful information on maps showing snow depth, wind direction, soil moisture and drought, assisting nomads in crucial decisions on where to move next. Mongolia hosted talks on a global desertification treaty, known as COP17, last month.

Countries agreed financing for land restoration and tackling drought resilience,

but concerns remain over a massive funding shortfall to the growing problem.

Bilgudei told AFP he hopes to expand Hunu to central Asian countries, and met with pastoralists from Tanzania and Uruguay at COP17 interested too.

"Our problems are pretty similar," he said.

- Global dilemma -

About 80 percent of Mongolia is rangelands, large tracts of unfarmed land covered by native grasses and shrubs, according to Chimeddorj Buyanaa, Mongolia conservation director at the World Wildlife Fund.

"Rangelands are critically important for the local communities and also for the livelihoods of all of the Mongolian people," he told AFP. Compounding the issue of climate change is rampant overgrazing that also endangers the region's wildlife, including snow leopards and saiga antelope, Chimeddorj said. Around one in four Mongolians are nomadic herders. Nearly 82 percent of the country's territory is affected by desertification and land degradation, authorities said in August. Many herder families have simply decided to pack up and seek new lives in the city. □

Russia probes bear attacks, as official says town under 'siege'

Moscow, Russia

At least six people have been killed in bear attacks in Russia's vast Siberian region of Krasnoyarsk in a month, prosecutors said Wednesday, as an official in a neighbouring region reported bears had put one town "under siege". Prosecutors said they had opened a probe into criminal negligence, accusing local officials of failing to control bear numbers.

Russia's brown bear population has more than doubled since 1990, from around 130,000 to almost 308,000 individuals in 2026, according to Russia's natural resources ministry.

While the number of bear attacks across Russia has remained constant at

around 20 to 30 a year, according to the ministry, local media and officials have expressed alarm about the rising numbers. Despite numerous warn-

ings, local officials "failed to take measures to regulate the predator population or prevent them from appearing in areas inhabited by people," the Inves-

tigative Committee of Russia's sparsely-populated Krasnoyarsk and Khakassia regions said on its website.

The bodies of two pensioners were found mauled in a forest near the remote town of Podtyosovo earlier this month, followed by the death of a 40-year-old factory worker who walked through the forest on September 6, according to local media.

Three others were killed in the following weeks, the latest of which was a 39-year-old logger guarding machinery in the forest early Wednesday, investigators said.

The deputy head of the neighbouring Khakassia region, Dmitry Buchenik, said

Wednesday that the forest town of Abaza -- home to around 10,000 people -- was surrounded by bears "on all sides".

"It was an alarming night in Abaza. The taiga town is effectively under siege by bears," he said.

"Some of the animals were chased off, but three were killed (one of them was huge)," he added.

Unverified social media videos purported to show a bear swimming across a river beside the town, while another showed a group of three bears leaping across a road in front of cars.

Russia's emergency ministry says bears flee in the vast majority of encounters with humans. □



A brown bear strolls through wasteland in front of the hospital in the Arctic city of Norilsk on May 22, 2022.

How Aruban beaches came to be!



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

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

the course of thousands of years, as waves continue to crash and fish continue to eat off the corals, sand starts to accumulate around the area. However, whether the sand stays there is another question to be answered, and this is where we highlight the biggest difference between the northern and southern coast of the island.



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

Why is the north deep, but the south shallow?

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

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

The Lionfish and its threat to our marine wild life



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

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

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

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

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

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

Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish were too much upkeep,



they were let out into the ocean to roam free. From continental USA, the lionfish travelled to and invaded the entire Caribbean area, from Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao up to New York. In Aruba, lionfish were discovered in 2009.

Controlling the lionfish population is challenge, as each female fish can lay up to 40,000 eggs a day. Luckily, we have people like van Brakel who dedicate their lives hunting and

capturing these invasive species, using them for consumption and jewelry making.

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

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(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!

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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 □

Conchi: Aruba's hidden natural pool

(Oranjestad)—Amongst the countless beaches surrounding the island that are well-known and frequently visited, there is an additional "hidden" natural pools that is situated in the north-

ern coast of the island, two ideal stops in your tour itinerary. This is Conchi.

Conchi (Natural Pool)

For many years, Conchi was the only natural pool

that we had on the island. Located in the Arikok National Park, near Boca Keto and the Daimari Ranch, Conchi—also known "Cura di Turtuga (Turtle's Cove) or just Natural Pool—is reach-

able with any 4x4 vehicle or by foot if you're up for a long hike. However, since it is part of the National Park, you must first get permission from park management to enter. You would have to purchase a day pass, and receive a wristband as proof of payment. Once you've completed that, you are set!

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

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

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



Unique fauna of Aruba

For a small island, Aruba sure has a lot of unique treasures. Among these, we have some subspecies of animals that are unique to our island. These have evolved to perfectly adapt to our desert climate and make Aruba their home. At the same time, they are part of what makes Aruba truly one of a kind.

Cascabel (rattlesnake, *Crotalus durissus unicolor*)

According to the Arikok National Park, Aruba knows two kinds of snakes, the Santanero and the Cascabel. The cascabel belongs to the rattlesnake family. The cascabel is the only venomous snake from Aruba. It has a length of 65cm to 100cm, and is about 4 to 5cm wide. Its color varies from light brown to grey-brown, and its underbelly is white. On its back there are marks that are a little darker, in the shape of diamonds.

Its reproduction is oviparous, meaning the offspring can hatch from their eggs just before, during or immediately after laying.

The cascabel lives mainly in the Arikok National Park. It likes to live in dark places, and is thus found hidden among the limestone rocks and under stones. As a defense mechanism, the cascabel uses its rattle as a warning, and it is not an aggressive animal.

The cascabel feeds on lizards, small mammals such as rats and mice. It paralyzes or kills its prey with its venom, which is injected through a bite. The enemies of the cascabel are donkeys, goats, humans and cars. Humans are the biggest enemy of the cascabel, as they kill them and destroy their habitat for urbanization.

Shoco (burrowing owl, *Athene cunicularia arubensis*)

The shoco is a small bird which is seldom seen. They are active during the day but are more active later in the day and at night for hunting. These owls have very good night vision and very good hearing. The shoco is the national sym-

bol of Aruba.

The shoco has about 20cm of length, and the females are slightly heavier than the males. They are light brown in color, with many white spots. The belly of the shoco is either white or light brown, and the shoco has striking yellow eyes. Its beak is yellow/green. Young owls do not have white spots and are lighter in color.

The nest of the shoco is a burrow in the ground. If the shoco cannot find a burrow, it will dig one in soft soil. The shoco lays one or two eggs every other day until all the eggs are laid. A shoco can lay up to four eggs. The first owlets hatch after three to four weeks. The shoco owl takes care of the owlets for three months until they leave the nest. Only a few owlets survive. The owls dig burrows in the ground with low grass vegetation. An owl can live up to nine years.

Its defense mechanism is simply to fly away or retreat to its burrows. They eat mostly insects, mice and lizards, and the main threats to their survival are boas an invasive species introduced by humans as pets and humans through destruction of their habitat.

Prikichi (parakeet, *Aratinga pertinax*)

The Prikichi is the national bird of Aruba. On Aruba, Bonaire, and Curaçao, parakeets can be found, but each of the three islands has a different breed. The Yellow-shouldered Amazon parakeet that we have on Aruba is also found along the coast of Venezuela. Unfortunately, there is interbreeding between the breeds due to cage birds from, for example, Curaçao being released on Aruba. The parakeet population on Aruba is in danger due to extensive deforestation occurring on the island because of the growing population.

The prikichi weighs between 90 to 100 grams. It has a greenish-brown head with some yellow around the eye. The back and wings of the parakeet are dark green, and the underside of the body is



a lighter shade of green. There is also a bit of blue in the wings. The parakeet's beak is gray/black.

Parakeets often use termite nests as breeding sites. Parakeets are found in all natural environments (mondi) of the island. It defends itself by flying away and loud cries. Parakeets eat seeds from the pods of the Kwihi tree, Divi Divi, and columnar cactus. They also consume natural fruits. Its main predators are boa constrictors, humans.

Coneu (cottontail rabbit, *Sylvilagus floridanus nigro-nuchalis*)

The Eastern Cottontail rabbit (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) was probably brought over to the island by Indian set-

tlers thousands of years ago as a source of food. This rabbit, locally known as Coneu, has spread all over the island and has become part of our ecosystem. The very adaptable Coneu can live in a wide variety of habitats, including Aruba's xeric scrublands, where it typically grazes on weeds and grasses.

The Aruban Coneu has a brownish grey color and a distinctive white belly. This white fur extends to the bottom of the tail which becomes visible as the rabbit runs. These rabbits can grow up to approximately 40 centimeters in length over their short lifespan of 3 years. Cottontail rabbits reach reproductive maturity when they are just 2

to 3 months old. A female rabbit, called a doe, finds a suitable nest spot under a shrub or rocks and lines it with fur. She can have an average of 3 to 4 litters per year averaging 5 young each. The doe only visits her young once or twice a day to nurse her babies for a period of 2 to 3 weeks. The young reach independence at 4 to 5 weeks.

The Aruban Coneu is an endangered species and protected by Aruban law. The Coneu is thought to have drastically declined due to an increase in human activities, habitat fragmentation and predation by the invasive Boa constrictor as well as feral cats and dogs. However, recently there seem to be more rabbit sightings in rural and wilderness areas and also in the National Park. This could be linked to a recent decline of the invasive Boa population after the long period of drought. As the Coneu can reproduce very quickly, a short break in predation pressure can lead to a fast increase of rabbits.

These are but a few of Aruba's beautiful inhabitant, which we must all contribute to protect. □



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Aruban legends: Frenchman's Pass

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

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



roaming the area of Spanish Lagoon.

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

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

fear, he didn't dare to get out, and the car started to move.

When approaching a sharp turn, the hitch hiker braced for impact, but just when he thought the car might drive straight off the road and crash, he saw a hand appear out the win-

dow and turn the wheel. For the next few turns, the hand appeared again. After having had enough, the man decided to jump out and he ran to Santa Cruz.

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

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

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

Source: visitaruba.com

Aruban snacks and where to find them

ORANJESTAD — Want to taste something different for a change? How about some Aruban snacks that you can find all around the island? Hop in your car, and go to these locations to find some of the most popular and tasty snacks that are beloved by our locals.

One of the staples of Aruban cuisine and snacks is the Pastechi. Pastechi is a Caribbean fried pastry that is filled with cheese, meat, chicken, veggies and sometimes even fish! Or perhaps you might want to try a croquette, locally called a "kroket," which is a crusty fried snack with typically a meat and dough mix filling. The Aruban kroket is based on its Dutch counterpart, the "bitterbal".



These two snacks are typically found in all local snack trucks, which can be found all over the island, including on the side of the main road that stretches from San Nicolas to the Hotel Area. You can also find them at local bakeries all over the island. These places may also sell other snacks and sandwiches too, perfect for on-the-road lunch break.

While you're at it, why not accompany your snack with a refreshing "batido"? Batidos are fruit shakes, typically made with added milk for some creaminess. However, you can also ask to hold the milk. Batidos are commonly found in snack shops too. You may find some batidos along the flea market downtown.

If you are looking for something a bit more fresh and healthy, why not try some coconuts, or shaved ice from local vendors? These vendors carry their little shop at the back of their truck, so they are ever-moving around the island. However, there are a few spots where you can almost always find a coconut/shaved ice vendor:



- Right next to the Red Anchor in San Nicolas, on the way to Baby Beach.
- Along the main road next to the airport field.
- At the California Light House.
- At the Alto Vista Chapel.

These vendors may also sell other delights, like the beloved coconut-based dessert "cocada" or peanuts. All in all, in Aruba, you can always find some place to take a break and have a bite of some-

thing local, you maybe just might have to look for them!

Photo credit: wheninaruba.com



The Aruban Cunukero: From past to present

(Oranjestad)—Aruba's culture consists of rich historical traditions that make up the Aruban identity and lifestyle. However, the life of the cunukero (farmer) is perhaps the most important aspect of our culture, in a sense representing to locals the true essence of the Aruban.

Historically, cunucus (farms) played a huge role in the early social and economic development of Aruba, and its relevance dates back to the early days of the colonization era. Upon being discovered by Spanish conquistadors in the late 15th century, Aruba was used primarily as a ranch, housing horses and cattle brought from Europe. During the Dutch colonization era where the West Indian Company (WIC) dominated the economic sphere on the island, using the land to set up cattle farms and ranches remained popular.

Anthropologist Sidney Mintz divided Caribbean farmers back in four categories:

- The "squatters", who were mostly comprised of illegal and poor colonists, runaway slaves and deserters who took advantage of the Spanish's weak supervision on Caribbean islands like Cuba and the DR;
- Then you have "Early Yeomen", who were legal farmers who came to the west under contract. Once their contract expired, they were given a plot of land for independent use;
- Proto-Peasants were plantation slaves who were allowed to have a small piece of land to grow food for their own consumption. This was to curb the cost of living on the plantations;
- Lastly you have the "Runaway Peasantries", usually comprised of runaway slaves who acquired farming tools and cattle through stealing or through secret exchanges with other slaves from different plantations.

However, the Aruban cunukeros back then are hard to place, and their history may explain why.

From 1636 (beginning of Dutch colonization era) to before the oil industry in 1924, Aruba's population consisted of mostly farmers. These farmers were mostly indigenous and were characterized as peasants. They weren't allowed to participate in trading, but instead were granted a piece of land to live off of. However, in exchange



for this grant, these indigenous farmers were obligated to work for the WIC, doing daily tasks such as taking care of or hunting cattle—large majority of which were destined for Curacao, clean water tanks and chop wood, among other things.

As much as these farmers were given to opportunity to live "free" with a plot of land, their exclusion from the trading and business world, as well as being deprived the chance to become real property and cattle owners, made them a unique group among Caribbean farmers at the time.

The WIC placed a lot of restrictions on these indigenous farmers—a method to safeguard their cattle deposit on the island. The indigenous farmers were mostly granted less than 7 acres of land. Those who owned bigger land were either once affiliated with the WIC or were colonists who settled on the island to try their luck at farming. In 1767, there were about 120 houses/cunucus on the island.

These Aruban farmers were also limited to the amount of cattle

they could keep. Most kept goats as cattle, as only those who were affiliated with the WIC could keep (more) sheep. Of the 76 goat herders on the island, about 45 of them had less than 30 goats, and only 7 of them had more than 60 goats.

It wasn't until the WIC was defunct in late 18th century that these farmers were able to obtain more freedom as cunukeros. After 1824, the government gave these farmers official permission to keep livestock, and the obligations once placed on them were officially discarded.

Because of the dry climate in Aruba, growing food for commercial purposes was not popular. The focus was mainly on cattle herding and taking care of livestock. However, livestock need food to survive, and when Aruba experienced its duper dry climate, many farmers would see a big loss in their livestock, and hence profit.

Although the WIC at one point did try to come up with an initiative to get more people to have land on the island, the climate never really allowed real profit from farming. Because of the climate, Aruban farmers in general could not keep large quantities of livestock. At a certain point toward the end of the 18th century, the climate got so bad that many farmers decided to leave the island for a while.

For this reason, the farming economy on the island remained small. As the years went by and people

noticed that these farms could not really produce any sustainable profit, farmers kept their small piece of land just to live off of. This is why the Aruban cunukeros only played a very tiny role into the plantation economy.

In modern Aruba, cunucus and cunukeros still exist on the island, fortunately with more freedom and more opportunity to tap into the agricultural market. These farmers usually sell their produce on a smaller scale, like during farmers' market events and other types of (holiday) events.

Source: "Arubaans Akkoord: Opstellen over Aruba van voor de komst van de olieindustrie (Aruban Accord: Essays on Aruba Before the Arrival of the Oil Industry)" by Alofs, Luc; Rutgers, Wim; Coomans, Henny E. red. □

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By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45. Fresh

1. Suspects' stories 46. Allergy sign

7. Musical work

11. Bleaching chemical 1. Fitting

12. Civil rights great 2. Baseball's Gehrig

13. Clash 3. "-- been swell!"

14. Resting on 4. Low singer

15. Web site feature 5. Cruise stop

17. Guitar bar 6. Citi Field's forerunner

20. Coldly distant 7. Wise answerer

23. Hoopla 8. Cook's protector

24. Kneecap 9. GI-entertaining org.

26. Turn bad 10. Easy target

27. Hurricane part 16. Critic, at times

28. Poorly lit 17. Yule song

29. Satellite 18. Cherish

31. Genesis name

32. Director Sergio

33. Wilma's husband

34. Jordan neighbor

37. Bulldog's school

39. Queen Anne's house

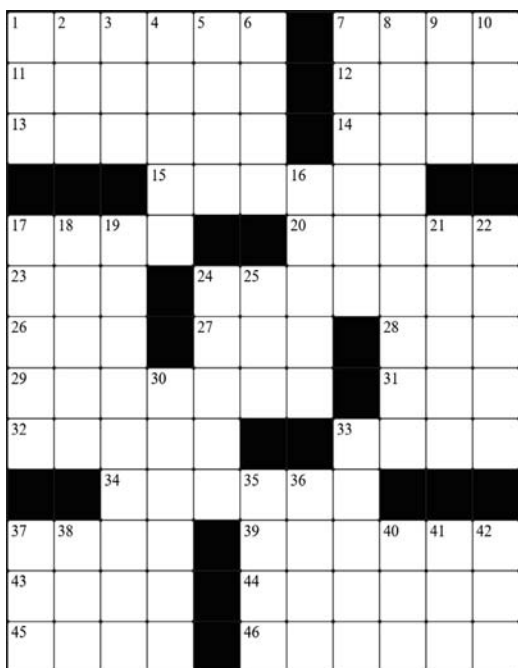
43. Company bigwig

44. Hearty dish



Yesterday's answer

19. Hack novel 36. School near Windsor
21. Green shade 37. Slangy agreement
22. Pro-minent 38. Feller in the woods
24. Piper of rhyme 40. Clumsy galoot
25. Yeoman's "yes" 41. Ahmed of "Sound of Metal"
30. Fly, e.g. 42. Casual top
33. Champagne glass
35. Pharaoh symbols



AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for 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.

9-23 CRYPTOQUOTE

S D G Q J J N M S G
I M C I O W V S B X I Q V ; M
I C Q B S Q D H H D C S O X M S M Q V .
- - - T C O I Q J Q Q

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: DELICIOUS
AUTUMN! MY VERY SOUL IS WEDDED TO IT.
--- GEORGE ELIOT

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Electrical power

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

Drinking water



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



store.

Supermarket hours

Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or

10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourists that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE	
15 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CELEBRITY REFLECTION Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
16 WED	FREEDOM OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: C
22 TUE	CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
23 WED	CARNIVAL GLORY Arrival: 13:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
27 SUN	FREEDOM OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C
29 TUE	CARNIVAL HORIZON Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: B GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: C CELEBRITY REFLECTION Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I 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

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

Difficulty: ★★★

9/24

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

9/23

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Archaeological 'breakthrough' could confirm origins of Paris



Paris Mayor Emmanuel Gregoire (2nd R) and France's Culture Minister Catherine Pegard (R) visit an archaeological site following the discovery of a Gallo-Roman era wall of Lutetia under the Hotel-Dieu hospital on the Ile de la Cite in central Paris, on September 23, 2026.

Paris, France

An ancient wall discovered in central Paris was hailed as a "major breakthrough" on Wednesday, as the archaeological find may have settled a long-standing debate about the location of the city's original settlement.

A roughly 20-metre (65-foot) wall dating from the Gallo-Roman period was discovered in Paris this summer beneath a hospital on the Ile de la Cite, a stone's throw from Notre Dame Cathedral, the French culture ministry said. The stone-and-wood find is thought to be a fragment of the ramparts of Lutetia the ancient name for Paris built by the Gallic Parisii tribe which lived along the river Seine in the Iron Age. The Ile de la Cite has traditionally been regarded as the centre of Lutetia, but a rival theory, backed by archaeological research, contends that it was actually in Nanterre, a suburb to the west.

"We may be looking at one of the most important remains ever discovered for understanding Gallic Lutetia," Culture Minister Catherine Pegard said in a statement, which described the discovery as "a major breakthrough".

"Scientific caution still requires that we verify its function and its chronology, but the convergence of evidence is particularly remarkable at this stage." Lutetia was first mentioned in book seven of Roman leader Julius Caesar's "Gallic Wars" series, where it was said to be on an island in the river Seine linked by bridges a vague description that has given rise to many theories about its location.

- 'Dizzying' -

The wall, uncovered in the course of excavations beneath the Hotel-Dieu hospital, also bears traces of fire,

which may correspond to Caesar's account that the Gauls set fire to their town before the Battle of Lutetia against the Romans. Through carbon dating technology, the charred evidence is estimated to date from 10-200 BC, the ministry said in its statement a timeframe that includes the Battle of Lutetia in 52 BC. The Ile de la Cite, home to Notre Dame cathedral, is the largest island in the river Seine in the Paris region and became the centre of the Roman settlement of Lutetia. "It's dizzying to find oneself here and to discover what

is probably the origin of the city of Paris," Paris mayor, Emmanuel Grégoire, said on Wednesday after examining the wall.

It is barely a metre high and had been been buried four meters deep in a courtyard of the Hôtel-Dieu hospital, which is the oldest of the capital.

An archaeological dig began there in February.

"All of our predecessors dreamed of finding traces of Gallic presences on the Ile de la Cite," said Dorothee Chaoui-Derieux, coordinator of archaeological operations in Paris for the culture ministry. □

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Meta leans into AI, smart glasses amid privacy pushback

Menlo Park, United States

Meta has spent billions to stay competitive with artificial intelligence, but the tech giant faces growing pushback as CEO Mark Zuckerberg prepares to announce new products built for the AI era on Wednesday.

The company will kick off its annual Connect conference from its Menlo Park headquarters at 4:00 pm PT (2300 GMT) Wednesday, and Zuckerberg will deliver a keynote address to the developer-focused event. Earlier this month the social media giant launched Muse, its first agentic app for consumers which is designed to perform tasks on behalf of humans, like a digital personal assistant.

After a user connects various personal accounts whether financial, health-related or shopping they can ask Meta to perform tasks like signing up for services, booking appointments and making calls.

Amazon blocked Meta this week from using AI



Meta's Ray-Ban Glasses on display in an electronic store on August 10, 2026 in Downtown Brooklyn in New York City.

bots to shop for users automatically, while other businesses including Instacart, Shopify and Expedia have announced partnerships to integrate their services into Muse.

The Muse agent is built on Meta's own AI models and is designed to compete with OpenAI's ChatGPT and Anthropic's Claude.

The company had its first pair of interactive smart glasses in 2021, about

a year before OpenAI sparked a global AI frenzy with its release of ChatGPT, and since then the devices have become more and more advanced.

- 'Pervert glasses' -

Last year, Meta unveiled a pair of augmented reality "display" glasses which project images on the lenses. And earlier this year, the company released self-branded AI glasses, apart

from its partnership with eyewear manufacturer EssilorLuxottica, which produces multiple Ray-Ban-branded Meta glasses.

However, their novelty quickly became clouded by privacy concerns, with critics dubbing the eyewear as "pervert glasses."

At last year's Connect, Meta's chief product officer Chris Cox brushed aside such concerns and told news outlets, includ-

ing AFP, that "social norms" would form around the use of smart glasses.

More recently, Meta has said a recording indicator light would always be visible to people nearby, and that tampering with the indicator light would disable the camera.

The company is reportedly working on a new pair of audio-only glasses, and has also been rumored to be developing a new generation of mixed reality glasses. Meta has also been battling children's safety and privacy issues around the world. In August, the company settled a lawsuit with dozens of attorneys generals in the US who accused Meta of violating state and federal laws regarding consumer protections and children's online privacy.

As part of the settlement, Meta agreed to pay up to \$18 billion in fines and enact restrictions for teenagers. Meta faces social media restrictions and bans for younger users around the world, as well as thousands of potential personal injury lawsuits in the US that are still making their way through state courts. □

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Tech elite's new school aims to replace university

San Francisco, United States

The most powerful venture capital firm in Silicon Valley is starting a two-year private school for young people intended to replace college, as some U.S. tech elite question the benefits of a classical university ed-

ucation.

The Horowitz Andreessen Academy, or HAA, is backed by veteran investors Marc Andreessen and Ben Horowitz, two towering figures of the U.S. tech industry and founders of venture capital giant An-

dreessen Horowitz.

The announcement said students would hear lectures from tech leaders including Nvidia chief Jensen Huang, Microsoft chief Satya Nadella, Uber founder Travis Kalanick and former OpenAI executive Mira Murati.

It framed San Francisco itself as central to the project, describing the city as unusually open to newcomers and a hub for innovation.

"We think this can be an elite institution that attracts top-tier talent one that prepares students for the future rather than remaining stuck in the past," the academy's CEO, Gagan Biyani, said on X.

The venture has raised \$42 million from investors, including Shopify chief executive Tobi Lutke, DoorDash

chief executive Tony Xu, and former Instacart chief and OpenAI executive Fidji Simo.

"We live in an age of infinite knowledge, and we are entering an age of infinite doing," the academy said in its launch announcement.

Biyani said the program would replace lecture-heavy coursework with independent, business-oriented projects, describing the model as closer to Oxford's tutorial system or the Montessori method than a conventional university.

Some of the tech industry's most celebrated founders never finished college Microsoft's Bill Gates and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg both left Harvard, while Apple's Steve Jobs dropped out of Reed College. □



Venture Capitalist and Andreessen Horowitz Co-Founder Marc Andreessen and Producer Mike Judge speak onstage during "Satire in Silicon Valley" at the Vanity Fair New Establishment Summit at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts on October 8, 2014 in San Francisco, California.

U.S. seeks 11th Presidents Cup win in a row over global foes

Medinah, United States

United States golfers will try to stretch their win streak to 11 while the Internationals seek their first victory since 1988 when the 16th Presidents Cup begins Thursday at Medinah.

The Americans own a 13-1-1 edge over their non-European global rivals in a biennial series that has failed to produce the drama and tension of the U.S.-Europe Ryder Cup rivalry.

The Internationals' lone triumph came 28 years ago at Australia's Royal Melbourne with a 2003 draw in South Africa their only other bright spot.

The global squad will try to pull off a "Miracle at Medinah" in the footsteps of Europe's 2012 Ryder Cup fightback from 10-6 down with eight wins and a draw in singles for a 14.5-13.5 victory at the suburban Chicago layout.

But they will not be drawing much inspiration from that comeback.

"We really just focus on what we're doing," said Internationals captain Geoff Ogilvy of Australia. "The boys are excited. We all have memories, pretty vivid memories, of watching that Sunday at that Ryder Cup, just as an interested observer.

"We take our own inspirations from our own sort of



Scottie Scheffler of the U.S. Team and Russell Henley of the U.S. Team talk on the eighth hole prior to the Presidents Cup 2026 at Medinah Country Club on September 23, 2026 in Medinah, Illinois.

stuff."

U.S. captain Brandt Snedeker, who won his 10th PGA Tour title in May at Myrtle Beach, had no clue why the Americans could dominate the Presidents Cup yet lose nine of the past 12 Ryder Cups.

"Trying to figure out the secret sauce, if you will, of why the success has been this way is the hardest question we're trying to answer," Snedeker said.

"The makeup of every team is different. The bonding in every team is different. So trying to navigate that is really difficult."

Americans boast eight of the top 11 players in the world rankings with world number one Scottie Scheffler, Cameron Young, Wyndham Clark, Sam Burns, Collin Morikawa and Russell Henley plus captain's picks Chris Gotterup and Xander Schauffele.

Other U.S. captain's picks include Justin Thomas, Patrick Cantlay and rookies Jacob Bridgeman, a winner last week at Biltmore, and Jackson Koivun, a 21-year-old who won the 3M Open in July in only his third professional start.

Scheffler is only 3-5-1 in prior Presidents Cup appearances but Snedeker is not worried about the reigning PGA FedEx Cup champion. "Scottie Scheffler being Scottie Scheffler is the most important thing for us as a team. We can't ask him to do more than he can do," Snedeker said.

"He can only deliver five points at his best, if he goes out and plays unbelievable. We just want Scottie to go out there, be comfortable, have fun and be the Scottie Scheffler he is every week.

"I don't want him to take a

burden on. He's not going to win or lose us this Presidents Cup. The Presidents Cup is won or lost by 12 people."

Ogilvy, the 2006 U.S. Open champion, helped in a redesign of Medinah, which reopened in 2024 and could play soft this week due to rain.

"From an architecture standpoint, I would love to see it play firm. We built it to play firm," he said.

"To see some things played out exactly as we thought, and then other things it has... just been fun to watch them play it."

- 'Time is right' -

South Korean Kim Si-woo is the top-ranked International golfer at 13th followed by New Zealand rookie Ryan Fox at 24th.

Other veterans include Japan's Hideki Matsuyama, South Korean Tom Kim and Australians Min Woo Lee and Adam Scott, who makes his 12th Presidents Cup start still seeking his first victory.

Ogilvy's captain's choices included three rookies Japan's Ryo Hisatsune, Canada's Nick Taylor and Colombian Nico Echavarria plus Canada's Corey Connors, South Korean Im Sung-jae and South African Christiaan Bezuidenhout.

"The spirit of this group is really strong. □

Giants quarterback Dart season in doubt after injury: reports

New York, United States

New York Giants quarterback Jaxson Dart could miss the rest of the NFL season after a knee injury suffered against the Los Angeles Rams was worse than initially feared, multiple US media reported on Tuesday.

Dart, 23, exited the Giants' 28-6 loss to the Rams on Monday after his left knee buckled awkwardly following a double tackle by Los Angeles defenders Josaiah Stewart and Byron Young. Initial reports said Dart had escaped serious injury and only suffered sprained knee ligaments, with coach John Harbaugh saying the quarterback had avoided

a "devastating outcome." However ESPN and The Athletic, citing unidentified team sources, reported Tuesday that further evaluation indicated a serious injury which could sideline Dart for the remainder of the season.

Asked to comment on the reports on Tuesday, Giants coach Harbaugh said only that "evaluations are ongoing."

"We haven't got any final decisions yet," Harbaugh said. "We've learned a lot more. I wouldn't really want to share too much until until decisions get made. That takes more than one person.

"So when we know what direction we're going to have to go or or whatever it might be, we'll announce that. But we don't have that yet."

Dart's injury is one of several to have struck down NFL quarterbacks in the opening two weeks of the season.

On Sunday, Washington Commanders quarterback Jayden Daniels suffered an elbow injury in his team's loss to the Dallas Cowboys while Chicago Bears star Caleb Williams was also injured in a loss to the Minnesota Vikings.

Williams' back-up Tyson Bagent is also facing a potential spell on the sidelines

after being placed in the concussion protocol on Sunday.

In week one, Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam

Darnold suffered a glute injury while Minnesota's Kyle Murray suffered a concussion. □



Jaxson Dart #6 of the New York Giants lays on the ground after being tackled by Byron Young #0 of the Los Angeles Rams during the first quarter of the game at SoFi Stadium on September 21, 2026 in Inglewood, California.

Spain survive doubles scare to reach BJK Cup semi-finals

Shenzhen, China

Cristina Bucsa overcame fatigue and rebounded from a disappointing singles loss to help Spain punch their ticket to the Billie Jean King Cup semi-finals for the first time since 2008 in Shenzhen on Wednesday.

Bucsa and her teammate Sara Sorribes Tormo secured the deciding doubles point by triumphing 6-2, 7-5 over Anna Danilina and Zhibek Kulambayeva to clinch the quarter-final tie for Spain over Kazakhstan.

The Spanish pair saved a whopping 18 out of 20 break points throughout the gruelling two-hour seven-minute doubles affair. The second set alone lasted 88 minutes.

"The girls, they have really



Spain's Cristina Bucsa (L) and Sara Sorribes Tormo shake hands during their women's doubles quarter-final match against Kazakhstan's Anna Danilina and Zhibek Kulambayeva at the Billie Jean King Cup tennis tournament in Shenzhen, in China's southern Guangdong province on September 23, 2026.

good fighting spirit, they put in all their heart and passion. I'm really proud of all of them. But the competition doesn't end here, we have semi-finals on Friday," said Spain's team captain Carla Suarez Navarro.

Spain's Jessica Bouzas Maheiro claimed the opening point of the tie with a 6-2, 6-2 win over Sonja Zhiy-enbayeva, before world number 79 Yulia Putintseva kept Kazakhstan alive in the contest by defeating Bucsa 6-2, 3-6, 6-1.

Putintseva's victory, her 28th in the competition, saw her equal the record held by Galina Voskoboeva for most BJK Cup matches won by a Kazakh player.

Bucsa had arrived late in Shenzhen after reaching the singles semi-finals and winning the doubles title at the WTA tournament in Guadalajara last weekend.

The long trek from Mexico to China may have accounted for her slow start against Putintseva, who played a near-flawless opening set to take the lead in just 33 minutes.

Bucsa dug deep in the second, countering Putintseva's drop shots with her own mix of big-hitting and soft touches to level the match.

But the 35th-ranked Spaniard ran out of gas in the third, as Putintseva swung the momentum back in her favour to clinch the win and take the quarter-final tie into a deciding doubles showdown.

- Double duty for Bucsa -

The day was not over for Bucsa, who was back on court some 30 minutes later to partner up with Sorribes Tormo in doubles.

As the highest-ranked Spanish player in both singles and doubles, the Moldova-born Bucsa knew her team were relying on her to pull off double duty in Shenzhen and the 28-year-old did not disappoint, as she sealed the deal alongside Sorribes Tormo to send Spain through to a semi-final meeting with the Czech Republic. □



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