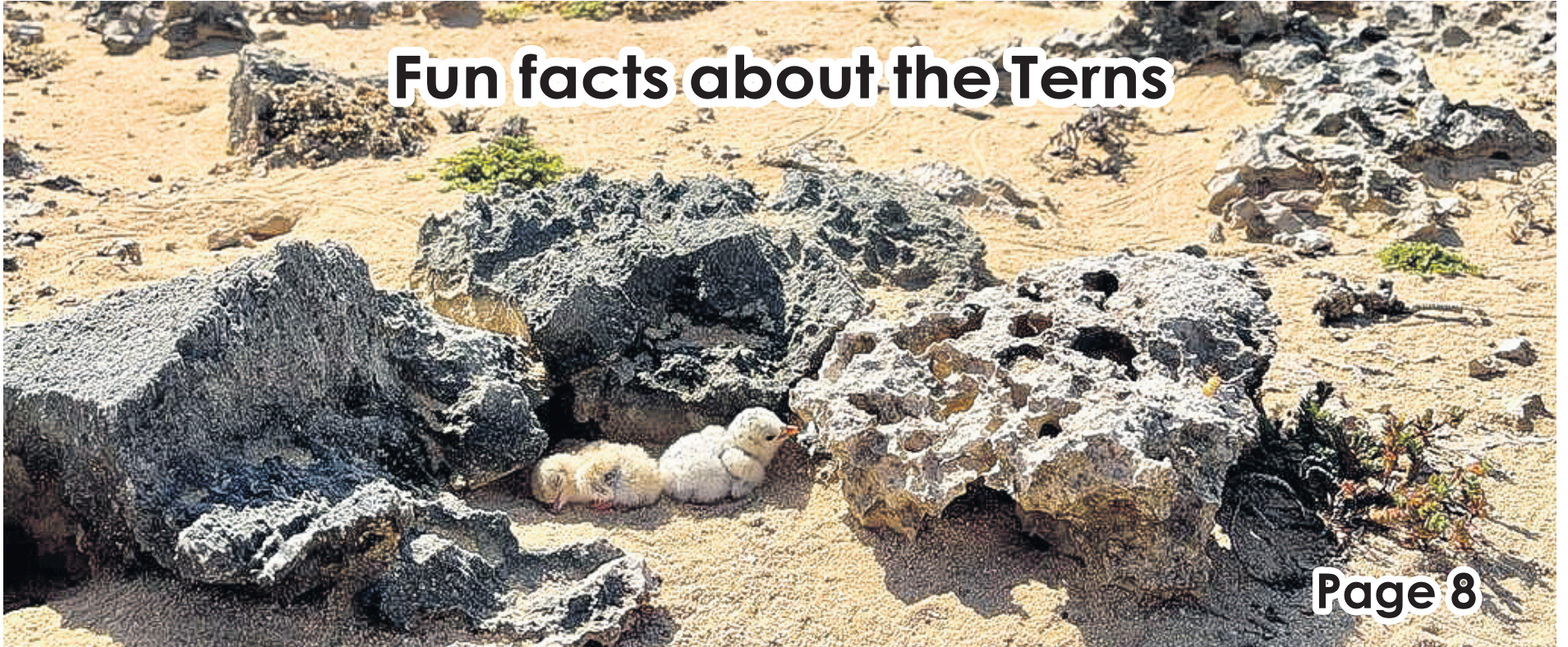




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Rabbi Nadav Caine (R), senior rabbi at Beth Israel Congregation chants the blessing for the bread with his daughters Merav (L) and Ziva (2nd R), and wife Lynne, at their Ann Arbor, Michigan home on October 8, 2026.

‘Torn’ Jewish voters hold sway in battleground U.S. Senate race

Ann Arbor, United States

Rabbi Nadav Caine and his family gathered in their Michigan home to break challah bread for their weekly Shabbat meal, a brief respite from the acrimonious midterm election campaign dividing Jewish voters in their state.

The braided loaf, candles and sweet grape juice are weekly staples for many of Michigan’s roughly 100,000 Jewish voters who could help determine which party win a U.S. Senate seat and overall control of the chamber.

But while Caine is a long-term Democrat, he’s put off by the party’s candidate Abdul El-Sayed.

“I’m just mainly torn,” said Caine, 60.

El-Sayed, who won an upset Democratic primary victory on a populist message, is a Muslim and like growing numbers of Americans strongly opposed to Israel’s government and U.S. military aid. He’s also questioned Israel’s foundation as an explicitly Jewish state.

His outspoken defense of Palestinians and messaging missteps in the wake of a 2026 attack on a Michigan synagogue have dented his appeal in one of the country’s largest Jewish

and largely pro-Democrat communities.

“The dilemma for us is that (El-Sayed) is someone that I strongly believe and sense doesn’t believe Israel has a right to exist as a state or as a Jewish state and is someone who fosters the sense that Jews deserve the anti-Semitism they receive,” said Caine, a rabbi at a conservative synagogue in Ann Arbor.

“I think for a public figure that puts Jews’ safety at great risk,” he added, describing himself as socially moderate and religiously conservative in his expansive home nestled among vibrant fall foliage.

- ‘Jewish safety’ -

Caine was among Jewish locals signing a petition of “Nonnegotiable” red lines, including Jewish sovereignty in Israel, in response to El-Sayed’s rise.

It demands candidates “treat Jewish safety, self-definition, statehood and political participation as baseline, nonnegotiable commitments.”

El-Sayed, seeking to become the first Muslim U.S. senator, has not signed.

He drew criticism when he said “hurt people hurt people” after a Lebanese-born American drove an

explosive-packed car into a West Bloomfield synagogue, before opening fire and killing himself.

El-Sayed says he has “been able to listen and learn ... and where my comments in the past have caused unnecessary pain, to apologize.”

Caine said that if El-Sayed wins on November 3, there’s still hope he could do more to embrace Jewish community “values.”

And El-Sayed, who has faced intense Islamophobia, including from his Republican opponent Mike Rogers and President Donald Trump, still enjoys some Jewish backing, particularly among leftists.

Businessman Kirk Dornbush, 65, staked out the October 8 televised debate between El-Sayed and Rogers in Grand Rapids, wearing a yarmulke and brandishing an “Abdul for U.S. Senate” sign.

“Of the two candidates for Senate in Michigan only one of them has been discriminated against because of his religion,” he told AFP. “I’ve been discriminated against because of my religion and I’m Jewish so I’m voting with the guy who knows what it’s like.” □



A U.S. Marines’ Lockheed Martin F35-B jet prepares to land at Jose Aponte de la Torre Airport, formerly Roosevelt Roads Naval Station, on September 13, 2025, in Ceiba, Puerto Rico.

Pentagon, Lockheed announce agreement for 850 F-35 jets over 10 years

Washington, United States

The Pentagon and Lockheed Martin on Thursday announced a 10-year agreement for the production of 850 F-35 warplanes, underscoring Washington’s long-term commitment to the high-tech stealth aircraft.

The two sides did not specify a value for the agreement, which comes as the Pentagon seeks to strike multi-year deals to expand American weapons production and boost the U.S. defense industrial base.

The announcement “cements (the plane’s) role as the free world’s key frontline fighter for years ahead,” Lockheed Chairman, President and CEO Jim Taiclet said on a call with investors.

F-35s which Washington’s forces have used in combat during the US-Israeli war against Iran come in three versions that can cost more than \$100 million per plane.

The “framework agreement,” which the Pentagon said would “modernize and expand” the F-35 program, still requires congressional approval and funding.

“We have fundamentally changed how we stabilize the American defense industrial base to produce at speed and scale,” top acquisition official Michael Duffey said in the Pentagon’s announcement.

“By aligning financial incentives with actual performance, we are ensuring our warfighters are equipped with the lethal capabilities they need to fight and win,” Duffey said.

The F-35, a joint project between the United States and a number of allies, is one of the world’s most advanced military aircraft. There are more than 1,375 F-35s based around the world, according to Lockheed.

The deal, if approved, would give Washington a “predictable, affordable, and resilient” fighter jet program, Lockheed said, pointing to billions of dollars in expected savings thanks to “long-term pricing and industry volume discounts.”

- ‘Greater certainty’ -

In exchange for the Pentagon’s 10-year commitment, Lockheed Martin will fund \$7 billion in projects supporting the F-35s, the Pentagon said.

“With the greater certainty that comes from the US government’s transformative approach to F-35 production and sustainment, we can make the upfront investments needed to expand capacity, improve efficiency, and build a more resilient supply chain,” Lockheed’s Taiclet said in a statement. “That’s good for the taxpayer, good for our suppliers and, most importantly, good for the United States and its allies,” he added. □

The Trump rally: a slice of 'Americana' politics, coming to an end

Greenville, United States

Young students attending their debut political gathering, longtime supporters coming since 2015, or curious onlookers witnessing a presidential spectacle, they all agree: as Donald Trump runs his final campaign, no one will be able to replace his rallies.

"There's a lot of Americana. There's a lot of, you know, happy people," a Trump fan named Bart told AFP of Tuesday night's outdoor campaign event in Greenville, North Carolina.

Trump has been barnstorming across multiple US states ahead of the November 3 midterm elections, with his party at serious risk of losing their majorities in Congress. In this rural corner of the eastern United States, "we don't have stuff like this happen very often," said Bart, attending with his wife Courtney and their two children, ages 10 and 12.

Bart, who declined to give his last name, walked past a "MAGA" souvenir stand and rows of red, white and blue bunting before finding his seat on an airport tarmac where the rally was held.

It was a familiar feeling. He attended his first Trump campaign event in 2015. Since then, millions of Americans have experi-



U.S. President Donald Trump points as he speaks at a midterm campaign rally at Pitt-Greenville Airport in Greenville, North Carolina, on October 20, 2026.

enced this in-person ritual a unique blend of provocative verbal attacks, consummate showmanship, and tireless enthusiasm, all from a president who has reached age 80.

- Low-flying Air Force One -

For 18-year-old Jaycie Bulard, dressed in Republican red, attending the rally was a no-brainer.

"When I heard that he was coming to Greenville, I knew I had to come," said the nursing student enrolled at a nearby university.

"It's pure joy, I feel like a little kid on Christmas."

After an hours-long wait,

a plane flew low overhead: Trump had arrived. He strode onstage to the strains of "God Bless the USA," which has become a core part of his political events.

The president launched fierce attacks sometimes tinged with racist overtones against his opponents, claimed against all evidence that he won the 2020 election, and cracked off-repeated jokes before he yielded the stage to a local Republican US Senate candidate.

His rambling, repetitive Greenville speech clocked in at 111 minutes. As always,

he left the stage to the Village People's "Y.M.C.A." But these moments, celebrated by the "Make America Great Again" faithful, are the vestiges of a fading political traveling roadshow that only Trump has been able to pull off. The crowds and venues are getting smaller. Trump, constitutionally barred from a third term, must step down in January 2029.

"I'm nervous for the future," admitted retiree Patty Laronde, who was seeing Trump for the first time. "Who's going to take his place?" she told AFP. "I'm hopeful with JD Vance,"

the vice president widely seen as a potential 2028 presidential candidate.

- Turning politics into 'entertainment' -

Even if another such master of ceremonies emerges in American politics, David, a self-employed 51-year-old, vocalized what many attendees were likely thinking: "the copy is never as good as the original."

"He is an anomaly," added Troy, 59, a manager who also did not give his last name. "There's... never been a president like him," he added, "and I don't know there ever will be again."

Researchers contacted by AFP tended to agree.

By "turning political rallies into entertainment," Trump "takes alleged negative emotions such as resentment, grievance and disappointment and transforms them into excitement, pride and positive anticipation," explained Yagmur Karakaya, a sociology professor at Yale University.

He relies on improvised comedy and culture-war jabs, sports metaphors, the ever-present "winning" philosophy, and business jargon, weaving it into a unique style. □

X Community Notes 'failed' to flag U.S. election falsehoods, study says

Washington, United States

A crowd-sourced verification system used by Elon Musk's X failed to flag a vast majority of false claims related to the U.S. midterm elections including those promoted by the billionaire a study said Wednesday.

Community Notes, which allows users to contribute notes that add context or corrections to posts, was introduced by X in late 2022 and the same model is increasingly being adopted by other tech platforms. But researchers have repeatedly questioned its effectiveness in combating misinformation.

NewsGuard, a U.S. watchdog that rates the credibil-

ity of news and information sites, identified dozens of posts on X that advanced false claims related to the elections, including bogus allegations of election fraud.

Only 13 of those posts were tagged with Community Notes.

"X's crowd sourced fact-checking program failed to flag 93.1 percent of false claims related to the US midterm elections," NewsGuard said.

"The uncorrected X posts have drawn millions of interactions ahead of the November 3 midterm elections."

The falsehoods included a post by a conservative

commentator claiming that New York and California had made it illegal for voters to show -- and officials to ask for -- their voter ID. No such rule exists in either Democratic stronghold.

Musk has often promoted Community Notes, calling it "awesome" and asserting that all users, including himself, were subject to being corrected by the crowd-sourced model.

NewsGuard, however, said that Musk, who has 241.5 million followers on X, has advanced at least four false claims related to the midterm elections, none of which carried Community Notes.

X did not respond to AFP's request for comment. Studies have shown Community Notes can work to dispel some falsehoods,

like vaccine misinformation, but researchers have long cautioned that it works best for topics where there is broad consensus. □



The text 'Fake News' appears on a smartphone screen, and the X (former Twitter) logo displays as the background on a laptop computer screen in this photo illustration in Athens, Greece, on March 15, 2026.

French, Japanese authors try to write novel on one-day train ride

Kyoto, Japan

Sixteen writers half French-speaking and half Japanese boarded a luxury train in Kyoto on Thursday, faced with the unusual task of collectively writing a novel in under 24 hours.

The authors, who include Muriel Barbery, are taking part in a project by "L'écriture en mouvement" "Writing in Motion" a French association that promotes literary exchanges.

By the time the "Mizukaze" their striking, bottle-green train in the Art Deco style -- pulls into the western city of Matsue on Friday morning, they hope to have completed a 200-page story.

"It's a completely crazy project: coming together on an iconic train, where 16 voices must form a coherent and meaningful whole," said Barbery, famous in the English-speaking world primarily for her 2006 novel "The Elegance of the Hedgehog".

"We were each given the biography of a character someone whom all the oth-



French novelist Muriel Barbery, French writer Claire Berest, Japanese writer Machi Tawara, Japanese writer Mariko Asabuki, Japanese author Anna Ogino, French writer Paul Fournel and (From L, middle) Japanese writer Hifonari Tsuji, Japanese novelist Hitomi Kanehara, "L'écriture en mouvement" Association Founder Anne Forrest-Wilson, Japanese author Kaori Ekuni, French poet Frederic Forte and (From L, rear) French writer Christophe Ono-dit-Biot, Japanese poet Hisaki Matsuura, Argentine writer Eduardo Berti, French writer Herve Le Tellier, Japanese author Toh EnJoe, French author Richard Collasse pose for a group photo at Shin-Osaka station in Osaka prefecture on October 22, 2026.

er characters knew, and who is the reason why they all ended up on the same train," she added.

It is the second time Writing in Motion has orchestrated such a project. The first,

held in Canada in 2015, also united local writers with French counterparts.

The central theme and overall narrative were discussed before departure, but the plot set aboard the

"Mizukaze" itself will take shape as the journey unfolds.

The landscape outside, dotted with paddy fields and Japan's distinctive architecture, "will inevitably find its way" into the writ-

ing, said French writer Christophe Ono-dit-Biot.

- 'Synchronised swimming' -

So, too, will the train's spacious cabins, dark wood paneling, plush carpets and wall sconces that recall the opulence of the Orient Express.

"It's not like we're making a collection of separate short stories. We're creating a novel, and I'm working to build bridges between the different pieces," said Anne Forrest-Wilson, the founder of Writing in Motion.

Interpreters are on board to help ensure smooth communication.

In the train bar, Toh EnJoe, a master of Japanese science-fiction, sipped a glass of wine as he wrote.

"It would be nice if it all comes together. There's a high chance it won't," he said.

"Everyone is drawing their parts separately, so the key point is how everyone is going to coordinate with each other or not."

His own character, he notes, "is unusual... my protagonist is someone who missed the train".

Several of the Japanese authors have won some of their country's most prestigious literary awards, including EnJoe, who took the Akutagawa Prize in 2012.

Others include Hitomi Kanehara, a novelist known for her radical style, and the poet Machi Tawara.

The exercise follows the tradition of "Oulipo", a movement founded in the 1960s mainly by French-speaking writers seeking new literary forms by imposing constraints on their techniques. The group's best-known members have included Georges Perec and the Italian novelist Italo Calvino.

"Practicing gymnastics individually is not the same as doing it collectively. What we're doing is a little like synchronised swimming," Oulipo President Herve Le Tellier said. □

Woody Allen shoots new movie in Madrid

Madrid, Spain

Veteran Hollywood director Woody Allen is shooting his latest film on the streets of Madrid as the Spanish capital seeks to burnish its status as a global cinema hub. The U.S. director-screenwriter-actor, now largely ostracized in his home country by scandals, began the shooting for his 51st film earlier this month in the city.

Dozens of curious onlookers gathered on Wednesday as the crew shut roads in bustling central Madrid, where AFP saw the 90-year-old oversee the set. The creator of "Annie Hall" (1977), "Manhattan" (1979) and "Midnight in Paris" (2011), who has won four Oscars in his six-decade career, said the city offered the perfect setting. "I'd always thought of Ma-

drid as a very elegant and beautiful city and perfect for the kind of diplomatic atmosphere that I wanted for the story," he told a press conference earlier this month.

Allen said European cities seemed "exotic" with their "open boulevards, tree-lined streets" and old architecture, in contrast to U.S. locations where many of his greatest works were shot, notably New York. He described the film as "a comedy with romance, with intrigue, with infidelity, with all the ingredients that I always think are going to make a good story".

The majority of Allen's recent movies have been recorded in Europe after scandals left him ostracized in Hollywood, though he has never been convicted of any crime.

His adopted daughter Dylan Farrow accused him

of molesting her in 1992, when she was seven. Allen has denied the allegations. Allen stirred further controversy in 1997 by marrying Soon-Yi Previn, an adopted daughter of his ex-partner Mia Farrow, a relationship that was criticized as inappropriate.

- Economic boost -

Madrid, which has emerged in recent years as a prime destination for top cultural and sporting events, is seeking to capitalise on Allen's presence by attracting more tourism and investment.

City hall says the movie, which is unnamed but whose title will contain the word Madrid, will generate almost 1,200 direct jobs and nearly 2,300 indirect jobs.

The city and regional governments have both made financial contributions to the production. □



U.S. director Woody Allen (C) is pictured on a set of a movie in central Madrid on October 21, 2026.



General view of the Colombia's Presidency headquarters inside Army's Paraiso batallion ahead of the meeting of U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Colombia's President Abelardo de la Espriella in Barranquilla, Colombia on September 8, 2026.

Colombia's new 'Temu White House' fuels debate over seat of power

Barranquilla, Colombia

Colombia's new right-wing leader has built himself a costly new presidential palace a white-columned mansion far from Bogota that doubles as a political manifesto.

Tucked inside a Caribbean military base, President Abelardo de la Espriella's new headquarters is meant to embody two of his signature promises: a focus on Colombia's security forces and shifting power away from a capital accused of neglecting the country's regions.

The austere neoclassical building, set amid tropical gardens and palm trees in Barranquilla, has quickly become one of the most visible symbols of his presidency.

Admirers see a bold statement of decentralization from a leader determined to govern from beyond Bogota.

"For a very long time, the coast and the regions outside Bogota have been forgotten," said Libardo Charis, a 54-year-old furniture merchant in Barranquilla.

The debate has even prompted questions about whether a city of about 1.3 million people is the new seat of power.

De la Espriella has frequently refers to Barranquilla as

the "alternative capital."

Critics dismiss it as an expensive political stage set that has earned the mocking nickname "the Temu White House."

Constitutional experts say transforming Barranquilla into an official alternative seat of government would be difficult, although some Colombian presidents have occasionally governed from cities outside the capital.

"It is not an alternative capital. It is a place where the president stays for a few days and carries out his functions," constitutional lawyer Juan Manuel Charry told AFP.

Creating a second capital would require constitutional reform and approval by Congress.

- Political price tag -

From the streets around the sprawling military compound, little of the mansion can be seen.

The property sits inside a restricted area of more than 50,000 square metres, roughly the size of several soccer fields.

A modest sign outside reads: "Presidency of the Republic. Freedom and Order." The mansion has already hosted high-profile visitors, including U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Costa Rican President

Laura Fernandez.

Military personnel continue their daily routines around the complex, while official vehicles, aides and security details come and go.

The facilities include an underground bunker designed to shelter the president and senior civilian and military officials in a crisis.

An admirer of U.S. President Donald Trump, De la Espriella has bristled at comparisons between his new base and the White House. Yet social media has filled with memes highlighting the resemblance, while critics accuse him of embracing symbolism over substance.

De la Espriella often works from the compound dressed in tactical clothing, dark glasses and a baseball cap, blending into the military surroundings.

He arrives by helicopter or in convoys of armored vehicles, images regularly showcased on his social media accounts.

Recently he led a security operation in a nearby city carrying a pistol on his belt. Better known as the hometown of pop star Shakira and for its carnival celebrations than as a center of political power, Barranquilla has found itself unexpectedly at the heart of national politics. □



This photograph shows French painter Claude Monet's "Iris", 1924-1925, during a preview of 28 Impressionist works of the Schlumberger Collection unveiled ahead of the October 22, 2026, sale at Sotheby's auction house in Paris on September 17, 2026.

Monet's 'Iris' fetches 50 mn euros at Paris auction

Paris, France

"Iris," a monumental painting by Impressionist Claude Monet, sold for 50 million euros (\$56 million) including buyer fees in Paris on Thursday, becoming the most expensive artwork ever sold at auction in France.

The 1.60 metre high and 1.80 metre wide work had never left the billionaire Schlumberger family's mansion in Paris and was known only through a black-and-white photograph.

It was acquired by Jeanne Schlumberger (1889-1983), according to Thomas Bompard, co-head of the Modern and Contemporary Art Department at Sotheby's France.

"Iris" had been estimated at between 22 and 30 million euros, "the highest valuation ever given to a painting offered at auction in France," Sotheby's noted when presenting the sale.

It was painted by Monet in his twilight years.

Alongside "Iris", three other canvases by Monet were included in the sale, among them "Saul Pleureur" (Weeping Willow), valued at 9-12 million euros.

The sale comes in the year marking the centenary of Monet's death on December 5, 1926, which is being commemorated by two Paris exhibitions "Monet, Painting Time" and "Stories of Landscapes, from Monet to Hockney."

Three paintings by Paul Cezanne classified as "national treasures" were withdrawn from the sale a few hours before the auction began "with a view to their return to the artist's hometown, Aix-en-Provence," Sotheby's said.

It followed an agreement between the current owners and the city of Aix-en-Provence, which, with the support of the French culture ministry, is considering acquiring these works.

Another Paris auction on Thursday by Christie's saw 26 works being sold, including two Monet paintings "Bord des falaises a Pourville", which went for 12.7 million euros and "Trois pots de tulipes", which sold for 3.1 million euros.

A work by Pierre-Auguste Renoir, "Jeunes filles au bord de la mer," fetched 5.8 million euros, while "Nature morte au gruyere" by Pablo Picasso sold for 3 million euros.

The total amount of Christie's sale was 41.6 million euros, buyers fees included. □

Grabbing a bargain: Japan's claw machines cash in on inflation

Kawasaki, Japan

With one eye on her baby in a pushchair, Minae Kamata operates an arcade machine in a Tokyo suburb, manipulating a claw to grab not a stuffed toy but a pack of toilet paper.

As inflation weighs on Japanese households, huge arcades on the outskirts of major cities are installing claw machines filled with eggs, rice, laundry detergent and other necessities. The "shop-and-play destinations" merge essential buying with entertainment so that families do not feel a choice between bringing home the basics and treating themselves to a day out.

Kamata, a 25-year-old housewife, told AFP she won her prize after only two tries, at 100 yen (\$0.64) per attempt.

"If you're a bit lucky, it's the same as buying at a discount," she told AFP.

Experts say the trend is a response to Japan's prolonged wave of inflation, with prices having outpaced wage growth for years.

"Spending on food and everyday products has been continuously declining for five years because these have become targets for



An employee tests a claw machine dispensing hand soap at the Benex amusement park in Kawasaki on October 5, 2026.

budget cuts," said Naoko Kuga, a consumer behaviour specialist at the NLI Research Institute.

So "retailers are trying to make purchasing fun to encourage buying" and ease a sense of guilt, she added.

- The Costco model -

Claw machines were already booming in Japan before the inflation wave.

The "prize game" market more than doubled in 10 years to reach 417.7 billion yen (\$2.7 billion) in

2024, and now accounts for nearly 70 percent of arcade revenues, according to the Japan Amusement Industry Association.

In recent years, families in search of everyday items have become a larger part of their clientele.

In Kawasaki, on the southern outskirts of Tokyo, hundreds of machines at a venue operated by the specialist chain Benex are filled with bottles of soda, bags of sweets, and detergent.

"When a family spends 10,000 yen on a day of karaoke or bowling, they have fun and that's it. But at Benex, you go home with toilet paper, bottles, and toys," said Teruaki Tsuchiya, an executive at Tisco, which operates Benex.

"With inflation, parents are choosing the most cost-effective entertainment option." The company, which has five locations in Greater Tokyo and claims over one million visitors a year, scrapped its video games

and token machines last year to refocus on claw machines.

It says revenue through household product sales has increased 2.6-fold in two years.

Tsuchiya said the model is similar to chains like Costco or Ikea: large stores on the outskirts of cities, where land is cheaper and loyal customers come by car and spend relatively more.

- 'Treat myself a little' -

Japan's inflation rate has hovered near the central bank's two-percent target in recent months -- a modest figure for many developed economies but a shock for a country used to decades of stagnant or falling prices.

After "two or three hours" on the machines, Chiaki Sugai, a 56-year-old sushi restaurant employee, pushes a huge cart filled with trophies which cost her nearly 8,000 yen.

"Before, I used to buy a lot of snacks at convenience stores, but now I grab them here," she said.

Forty-nine-year-old Sachiko Iyokawa also appeared satisfied with her winnings: two boxes of premium eggs, cheaper than in supermarkets. □

Champion-chip: Best fries contest heats up Belgium

Brussels, Belgium

Thick or thin, greasy or crispy, with samurai sauce or a more traditional mayo dip? A TV show has been on a quest to find the best fries in potato-mad Belgium. For four years running "La meilleure friterie" (the

best chip shop), a light-hearted culinary competition aired by broadcaster RTL-TVI, has been seeking out perfection among fry peddlers in the country's French-speaking region.

Watching it is a "sacred Thursday night ritual", said

David Antoine, the host. Crowning a winner among a dozen contestants is no picnic.

"There's sometimes friction among the judges, but we always find that famous Belgian compromise" over a portion of fries, Antoine told AFP in a joking reference to the country's penchant for lengthy political negotiations.

Fried potatoes are a national dish and symbol of pride in Belgium, home to about 4,600 diners specializing in the dish known as "friteries" in French or "frituren" in Flemish.

That number "has remained stable for many years," said Bernard Lefevre of the National Chip Shop Union, an industry group, noting the "market is doing well".

Each has its own flair.

To Lefevre, a good chip is preferably cut from a Belgian potato of the Bintje variety and double fried in beef fat. And size is paramount.

"Anything under nine millimeters is too thin and anything over fourteen is too thick," he explained.

- Hand-peeled 'gold' -

At Hill's Burger, a diner in Brussels, chef Massimo Sefa has gone for a "size twelve" that is "a two-millimeter crust and ten millimeters of creamy flesh", he said.

The 23-year-old smiled nervously when the TV show's judges entered his joint and the cameras started rolling.

But the stress is worth it, he explained. The broadcast will shine a spotlight on his

friterie and a win would likely send sales skyrocketing. Sefa opened up shop with his two younger brothers, Lorenzo and Marco. For them chips are a family matter: their grandfather ran about 10 chip shops in Brussels.

"Wow, delicious, crispy, and peeled by hand," Fabienne De Corte, one of the judges, raved upon tasting the goods.

"Fries in Belgium are our gold," added her husband Patrick De Corte, who is also on the judging panel.

"Every little detail makes a difference."

The show has a devout following, including some who tag along for filming sometimes dressed as fry cones and chanting "We've got the fries, we've got the potatoes!" □



A television cameraman films during the shooting of an episode of the TV show "La meilleure friterie" ("The best fry shop") in a speciality restaurant in Brussels on September 17, 2026.

The history and meaning of the Aruban florin

(Oranjestad)—Aruba Today loves to share parts of the Aruban culture with our readers, diving into (historical) facts of Aruba, its culture and way of living. In this article, we'll look at the Aruban florin: its history, design and symbolism.

In Aruba, we know the 5, 10, 25 and 50 cent coins, along with the 1 and 5 Florin coin. Aruban Florin bills include the 10, 25, 50, 100, and rarely, the 200 bills. In Papiamentu we call our currency Florin, but the umbrella term for money is 'placa'. Cents are called 'cen' (pronounced: seng), both in the singular and plural form. Most coins are circular and their size depend on their worth. However, the 50 cent coin is easily recognizable by their square shape, as is the 5 Florin coin by their golden color. Every coin has the Aruban emblem carved on it, with the other side displaying the worth of the coin. The bigger 1 and 5 florin coins, however, contain the carving of the emblem on one side, while displaying the side profile of the Dutch king, Willem-Alexander, on the other side. When his mother, Princess Beatrix, was reigning queen, it was her profile that was carved on the two coins.

Outdated Aruban coins and their names

In the past, Aruban coins had distinctive names and also varied in worth. For example, a 5-cent coin was once called 'Dos Placa'; 10-cent coins were called 'Debchi'; 25-cent coins were called 'Diez Placa'



and the 50-cent coin was once called 'Yotin' (pronounced: jo-teen). We also used a distinctive coins worth 2 ½ cents, called placa too. However, this last coin is no longer in use and has become a relic of Aruban money. Back then, the 5-Florin coin used to also be square, but now it is circular.

Aruban bills: their design and symbolism

The Aruban Florin collection contains a variation of colorful bills, displaying incredibly detailed and beautiful designs that tell the story of Aruba on a single piece of paper.

Prior to 2019, the Aruban Florin bills were relatively simpler in design compared to now, but still included beautiful designs and colors, often depicting

local animals. These past designs were made by the Aruban artist Everino Fingal in 1990 up to 2019. Between 1990 and 1993, the 5 Florin coin was a bill. The Fingal designs also included a 500-Florin bill, which has now been discontinued.

In 2019, the Central Bank of Aruba commissioned a new design of the Aruba Florin bills, this time selecting artist and former art teacher, Nigel Matthew, to present his new design. Matthew kept the tradition of including local animals and the familiar colors on the bills. However, he included additional designs that represent the Aruban culture and link to the Indigenous inhabitants that were the first to set foot on the island.

Current design and symbolism

10 florin

On the 10-florin bill, you can see a Tortuga blanco (white turtle). The blue color symbolizes the blue Caribbean Sea. You can also see the ruins of the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins, a coral motif, and the symbols of Cas Floria (traditional Aruban house design) with a piece of mosaic.

25 florin

On this orange bill, you can see an Aruban medicinal plant called Shoshoro. The



birds Trupiaal, Shoco, rock drawings, and the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic are also depicted. There is also a Purun di ceramica (clay pot), in reference to the relics left behind by our indigenous ancestors.

50 florin

On this bill, we see the Cododo (blue lizard found on the ABC islands), Cangreu di tera (land crab), Willem III Tower, and again the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, as well as a beach plant called Banana di rif. The colors are pink/purple.

100 florin

This bill is green in color, representing nature. Here we see the Yuwana (Iguana), Aloe, Toteki (lizard), the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, and a dance group performing

the Baile di cinta (folkloric dance with silk ribbons).

200 florin

There is another bill with a value of 200 dollars. The brown color symbolizes the earth of Aruba. Here we see the Dornasol and the Warawara—both local birds, along with the symbols of Cas Floria with a piece of mosaic, the Tuna cactus plant, and the Caha di orgel (folkloric instrument, used for many traditional songs).

Extra fact:

The word "florin" is supposedly named after the Italian city of Florence or it's a reference to the Italian word "florino", both explanations related to historical Italian currencies. □

Source: Placa, placa, placa by the National Library of Aruba (BNA).

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, es-



pecially 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! □

Fun facts about the Terns

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

Why terns matter

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

Black Noddy nest on Aruba, making their conservation especially important.

Breeding season

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

In Aruba, there are ten different species of terns, all



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

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

How to protect them

Aruba Conservation Foundation advises everyone to keep their distance from

these seabirds, do not visit the reefs, do not fly drones around nesting areas, keep your dogs on leashes, do not drive on the coastline and do not leave trash thrown about. "Nature has no boundaries and its protection is a shared responsibility." □

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

At the south east coast of the island, standing alone on a windswept and barren land stands a popular Aruba landmark a large anchor. It overlooks the sea just beyond, watching over the shipping lanes. It stands there in memory and in honor of all seamen who have lost their life at sea.

Where to find the anchor?

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

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

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

About the anchor

Size

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



6 inches tall.

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

This type of anchor was manufactured by Hoesch Dortmund Horde, at a foundry located in Germany.

Where did the anchor come from?

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

Story 1:

"According to Mr. Manuel M. Curiel, an ex-Lago Tug Captain, a fully laden VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) was seeking a

mooring at the 15-mile anchorage, known as Bara, on the southern part of the island. This is the usual shallow mooring location for ships awaiting orders, etc. The weather was rough with strong current. The normal procedure is that they would walk out three shackles (about 90 feet) until the anchor touches the bottom while the chain must rest on the bottom. Subsequently, they will walk out some extra shackles and when the ship starts to swing or lean on one side, the anchor is properly set. Because of the rough weather, unfortunately they did not get the time to walk out the extra tackles and because of the tension exerted on the winch, it broke, and they lost the anchor and its chain."

Story 2:

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

he went with his tugboat along with a barge, to help. But eventually they had to cut the chain and let the anchor go to the bottom because they could not untangle them."

How did the anchor become a landmark?

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

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

Through the years

Through the years the Anchor was slowly weathering from the wind and salt. As time passed, sadly the origin and purpose of the

anchor slowly faded away from people's memories.

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

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

The best time to visit

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

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

Fun facts about the 'Lisinbein'



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

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

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

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

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

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

A mother's love

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

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

No bark, but all bite!

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

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

Food culture in Aruba

(Oranjestad) – Like many other cultures, an important aspect of the Aruban cultural identity is our connection to food and food traditions. The local food traditions consist of a melting pot of different cultural and religious eating habits and dishes.

Breakfast, lunch and dinner

The routine of breakfast, lunch and dinner on the island is one that does not completely follow a European or American routine, despite the major influences from these parts of the world on our culture and way of living. When it comes to the three important meals of the day, most of the Aruban population follows a Latin-American influenced routine.

Breakfast

Breakfast in Aruba is quite simple: a cup of coffee or tea, some bread, and sometimes an egg. Sometimes, due to the need of a quick "to-go" breakfast, you may also find many snack trucks and cafes that sell sandwiches, pastechis (meat pie), arepas and empana-

das early in the morning.

Main Meal

The main meal is typically eaten in most households around noon or in the afternoon. This can consist of meat, fish, and chicken—stewed or fried—with funchi (polenta) or rice with stewed vegetables. Often, fried or boiled plantain or pan bati (Aruban pancake) is included. Stews are a staple in Aruban cuisine and can be largely influenced by Latin-American and Latin/Afro-Caribbean Stews. Some of the more unique stews and soups from the ABC Islands* include sopi bonch'i rabo (red kidney bean soup with pig tail), sopi mondon-go (tripe soup), carni stoba (beef stew), comcomber stoba (West Indian gherkin stew) and much more.

Dinner Time

Dinner time can vary significantly from household to household. Unlike the U.S. or in Europe, dinner time typically does not consist of a whole (warm) meal. Instead, the evening "meal"

can typically consist of something lighter, like a sandwich, though it is not uncommon to see leftovers from the main meal reheated and eaten again. Tea and coffee are often also served with the evening snack.

(Religious) Holidays

Christmas is probably the biggest global holiday, and every culture has its own spin on what their Christmas cuisine entails. In Aruba, our Christmas cuisine is again largely based on Latin-American influences, most notably from Venezuela. Ayacas and the famous pan di ham* are two crucial holiday dishes, along with stuffed turkey, roasted glazed ham topped with pineapples, arroz con pollo (rice and chicken) and potato salad, among other items. Traditional drinks include ponche crema (Aruban eggnog), chuculati pinda (hot chocolate with peanut butter), and homemade fruit punch. Desserts include bolo di pistachio (pistachio cake), bolo di cashupete (cashew cake), quesillo (flan), bolo preto (fruit cake), drigidek



(gingerbread), pan boyo (bread cake) and more.

Snacks and tasty delights

Besides meals and dishes that are eaten on the dinner table, Aruba also has a food tradition that includes snacks and other tasty delights that you may easily find around the island. These include, Saco*, baskets, pastechi, kroket, deditos, Johnny cake and more. These snacks are usually sold at local snack trucks and cafes, often located on the side of the road. In the area of Tanki Leendert and Tanki flip, for example, there are many of these trucks parked on the

side of the road and often open until late at night—offering tasty and filling snacks post night-life fun. □

***ABC Islands: Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao**

***Pan di ham: Derived from the Venezuelan Pan de Jamon (rolled up bread with ham, raisins and olives)**

***Saco: Saco literally means "bag". Saco contains fried potatoes, plantains, chicken (and ribs) and a Johnny cake, served in a paper bag.**

Source: Voeding, voedingsgewoonten en gerechten op Aruba (Nutrition, Food Traditions and Dishes on Aruba) by Biblioteca Nacional Aruba

Get to know the history of the gold industry on Aruba

(Oranjestad)— We have talked about the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruin before and its brief history during the gold industry on Aruba, but get to know a little more about the history of the “Aruban Gold Rush.”

The first hint of gold on Aruba actually dates back to 1725, when rumors about gold being found in dug up treasure chests of the Spanish colonial era prompted the first official exploration for gold on the island, commissioned by the Dutch West India Company. Under the leadership of Mr. Paulus Printz, a three-year search was conducted on Aruba, to no avail. Though they found some specks of gold, it was not enough to motivate a further search, and the assignment was discontinued by Printz himself.

It wasn't until 100 years later, in 1824, when a young farmer boy named Willem Rasmijn found a lump of gold while out herding his father's sheep in the area of Rooi Fluit on the north coast. His father took it to a local merchant who then sold the lump for \$70. Unbeknownst to the boy and his father, they quite literally struck gold, and as word got out, a gold fever spread among the locals who started searching for more gold.

When the colonial governor in Curacao, Governor Cantz'laar, heard about the news, he sent his adjutant, Capitan van Raders, to start harvesting gold. This was in July 1824. In August of that same year, the governor followed suit to the island, accompanied by high-ranking military officials. When citizens started swarming the area in search for gold, The Netherlands sent more troops to safe guard the gold. Prominent places where gold was found was in Daimari, Wacobana, Arikok, Rooi Fluit, Hadicouradi and later West punt, where gold ore was found. Because of a lack in advanced technology and materials to harvest the gold, the process took a more primitive approach: Clay rocks containing traces of gold were left to dry in the sun. Then, workers would start chipping the clay away on a large canvas to catch the gold particles that were left behind after the wind blew away the dust from the clay. In the harvest period of 1824-1825, there was a total of 71,000 kilos collected through commissioned harvesting. Locals themselves reportedly found about 25 pounds worth of gold in the nearby rivers. The following years after that first big harvest, commission work fell



off, and in 1828, the director of the goldmines, Johan Gravenhorst, decided to halt harvesting.

Almost 40 years later, the London-based Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. was granted concession. The firm built their gold mines on Bushiribana, and in the port of Oranjestad a long road that connected the gold mill to the port. The ores themselves came from Sero Plat en Sero Cristal.

By this point, workers were still using primitive methods to harvest the ores. For example, when someone had to go into the mines, there were no stairs or lifts; the person had to be brought down in a big bucket, with two or more workers holding the bucket by a thick rope above ground.

Aruba Island Gold Mining Company Ltd. reportedly operated until 1899, and right after the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. was established, coincidentally also based in London. This time, the gold mill in Balashi was built, and more mines were dug up all around the island. The gold ores that were found were transported via track engine, locally called the “trekinchi”. Despite being more equipped for the job, the Aruba Gold Concession Ltd. could not produce any real profit, and so the concession was terminated just eight years

later, in 1908.

A local firm, the “Aruba Goud Maatschappij” (Aruba Gold Company) took over the concession, along with all the materials and equipment. In the beginning, the company saw good profit, and for a while, the island's economy depended primarily on the mining and harvesting of gold. But just like its predecessors, the streak of luck for the Aruba Gold Company came to an end when WWI broke out.

The main reason why production stopped this time was reportedly because of a lack in dynamite for extracting the ores from the mines, as well as a lack in raw materials like German cyanide for the refining process. By the time the war ended, the equipment that was left at Balashi were too old to use again. After the war, gold production on the Aruba was left to a standstill.

According to an issue in Aruba Esso News paper in 1953, Henny Eman wanted to start up digging again, this time using independent miners. He argued that there was proof of more gold to be discovered. Plus, hiring independent miners would boost the island's employment rate.

When it was proven that gold was in fact still present, the executive board on the island promised to

fund the project only if the gold dug up proved to be valuable. However, nothing else was reported after this, so it could be concluded that there was no real profitable market on the island anymore.

The ruins of the Bushiribana and Balashi Gold Mills are still standing, and open for the public to visit. These structures offer a glance into the past, to a time where Aruba experienced one of its first wave of industrialization. Today, these structures are persevered as historical monuments. □

Source:

1. “De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over the geschiedenis van Aruba)” by Evert Bongers.
2. Aruba Esso News, 1953 issue.



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CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1. Boarded

6. Opera cheer

11. Bakery come-on

12. Swift

13. Produce

14. Without break

15. Counter-part

17. Tentative taste

19. Blazed a trail

20. Nasty dog

23. National park in Maine

25. Ring of light

26. Outdoor gathering

28. Pot start-er

29. Frozen plain

30. Pig's digs

31. Junior, to senior

32. Buddy

33. Violinist Elman

35. Bolivian city

38. Brother of Groucho and Chico

41. Tolerate

42. Rocker John

43. Puzzles

44. Flair

DOWN

1. Yak it up

2. Refiner's supply

3. Frat

4. Troubling sign

5. Merchant of music

6. Worry

7. Chimed

8. Gorilla or gibbon

9. Coq au --

10. Unmatch- ed

16. Crude sheds

17. Long tales

18. Defeatist's words

20. Bridge gathering

21. Extreme



Yesterday's answer

22. Fit for a king

24. HST

25. Solo in space

27. Boxer's deliveries

31. S, M, L, and XL

33. Created

34. Sentry's command

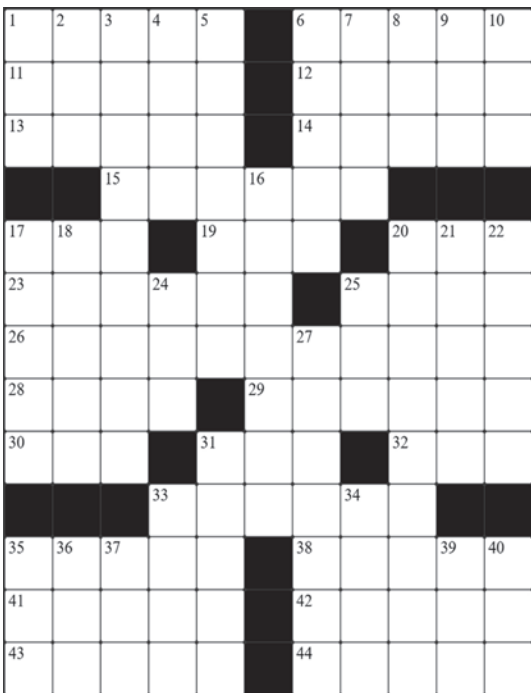
35. Bathroom, informally

36. Penny prez

37. Films, slangily

39. Campaign pro

40. Low digit



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.

10-22 CRYPTOQUOTE

PLBM PNGFV Y VN PYMNGM

MLA BZHGUV BJV MLA

AOLAKAUBF? - - - RUYVB IBLFN

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: THE REAL TRICK IS TO STAY ALIVE AS LONG AS YOU LIVE. --- ANN LANDERS

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

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

Electrical power

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

Drinking water



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

buy bottled water from the store.

Supermarket hours

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

Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as



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

CRUISE SHIP SCHEDULE

OCTOBER

20 TUE	CARNIVAL MAGIC Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C GRANDEUR OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
21 WED	EURODAM Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: C ALLURE OF THE SEAS Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 23:00 Berth: I
22 THU	NIEUW AMSTERDAM Arrival: 8:00 Departure: 17:00 Berth: B CARIBBEAN PRINCESS Arrival: 9:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C
25 SUN	CORAL PRINCESS Arrival: 10:00 Departure: 22:00 Berth: C

SUDOKU

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

King Classic Sudoku



Difficulty: ★★★★★

10/23

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

10/22

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Nearly all coral reefs risk collapse in 50 years: IUCN

Yerevan, Armenia

Nearly all of the world's shallow-water coral reefs face an extremely high risk of collapse by 2075 due to climate change, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) warned Thursday.

In the first global assessment of its kind, the world authority on threatened wildlife classified 96 percent of the planet's coral reef systems as "critically endangered" its highest risk category.

Corals are heat sensitive and particularly vulnerable to human-driven climate change, which is warming the world's oceans and increasing the frequency and intensity of damaging bleaching events.

"The future threat of climate change is looming and severe, and that poses a very high risk to the survival of these ecosystems," said Mishal Gudka, scientific lead of the IUCN Red List of Coral Reef Ecosystems assessment.

The emergence this year of a "super" El Nino, the natural warming phenomenon, also presents a risk to corals, Gudka said at a news conference at the UN's COP17 biodiversity summit in Yerevan, Armenia.

The IUCN presented its findings at COP17, where governments are under pressure to make progress on a landmark pact to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030. For its assessment, the IUCN used the "middle-of-the-road" scenario from the UN's panel of climate experts that projects global temperatures rising 2.7C above pre-industrial levels by 2100.

The world is on track for 2.6C warming this century under current global commitments to cut planet-heating emissions, the United Nations warned Wednesday.

"Heat stress from climate change is the single most consistent threat driving coral reef decline worldwide," the IUCN said in a statement.

Overfishing is also hurting corals as certain herbivores and predators help control



Hambardzum Matevosyan, Armenia's Minister of Environment and COP17 President, talks to the media during the 17th meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 17) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), in the Armenian capital of Yerevan on October 22, 2026.

algae and maintain an ecological balance, the organization said.

The overexploitation of parrotfish and other groupers threatens 63 percent of coral reef ecosystems. Coastal development, pollution, tourism and more frequent storms are among other threats.

- Critically endangered coral -

The IUCN's analysis examined 127 tropical and subtropical coral systems covering 188,362 square kilometers.

The world's largest and most biodiverse coral reefs are among those classified as critically endangered Australia's Great Barrier

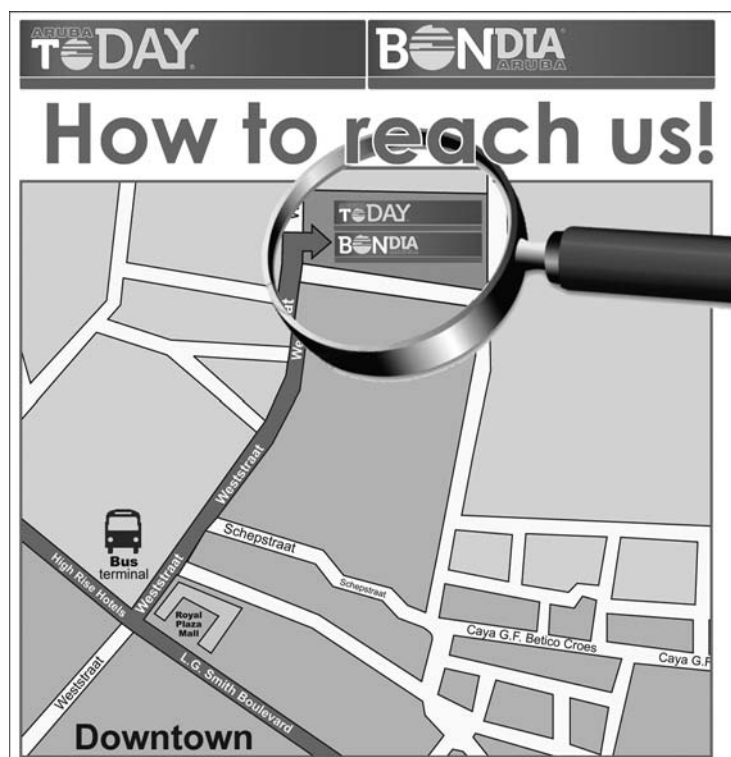
Reef, the Coral Triangle in southeast Asia and the western Pacific, the Caribbean's Mesoamerican Barrier Reef System, and the Red Sea coral reefs.

A reef ecosystem collapses when hard corals which build its living foundation largely disappear and are replaced by algae, rubble and sponges.

A study published in the journal Nature last week found that, by 2020, nearly half of coral species were at "elevated relative risk of extinction", with climate change the main driver of this decline.

Despite its warning, the IUCN said coral reefs in most parts of the world "are not yet lost".

If scientists look only at what has happened over the past 50 years, excluding future climate projections, 24 percent of coral reef ecosystems would be deemed critically endangered instead of 96 percent, the IUCN said. □



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Five things to know about Chinese AI startup DeepSeek

Beijing, China

The United States Department of Homeland Security ordered government agencies on Monday to stop using artificial intelligence tools from DeepSeek, citing concerns over data being transferred to China.

Here are five things to know about the Chinese AI startup following the new restrictions:

- 'Sputnik moment' -

Founded by Liang Wenfeng in the eastern Chinese tech hub Hangzhou, DeepSeek started life in 2023 as a side project of Liang's data-driven hedge fund that had access to a cache of powerful AI processors made by US chip giant Nvidia.

It gained global attention in January 2025 with the release of its R1 deep-reasoning large language model, which sparked a US tech share sell-off.

Industry insiders were stunned by R1's high performance at a level similar to ChatGPT and other leading U.S. chatbots and DeepSeek's claims to have developed it at a fraction of the cost.

Venture capitalist Marc An-



A photo taken on October 21, 2026 shows the logo of China's Deepseek AI application on a smartphone screen and the logo of China's Kimi AI application on a laptop screen (top) in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany.

dreessen described it as a "Sputnik moment", referencing the 1957 launch of Earth's first artificial satellite by the Soviet Union that stunned the Western world.

- Censorship concerns -

Like other Chinese chatbots, DeepSeek's AI tools eschew topics usually censored in the world's second-largest economy, such as the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown.

That and data privacy concerns have led DeepSeek AI to be banned or restricted on government-issued devices in several countries, including the United States, Australia and South Korea.

On Monday, the U.S. went further by banning civilian government agencies from using products developed by DeepSeek and third-party tools created using DeepSeek.

China's foreign ministry said it opposed that move and accused the US of "overstretching" the concept of national security.

DeepSeek's low cost and ease of deployment have made it a popular choice in developing countries, analysts say.

The company holds around four percent of global market share for chatbots, according to web traffic anal-

ysis company Similarweb. ChatGPT dominates at 68 percent.

- Open source -

DeepSeek's systems are open-source, meaning their inner workings are public, allowing programmers to customize parts of the software to suit their needs.

That is the same for other major Chinese AI players, including tech giant Alibaba, in contrast to the "closed" models sold by OpenAI and other Western rivals.

The Chinese government has trumpeted its lead in open-source AI technology, which it says can accelerate innovation.

"Chinese AI models are leading the way in the open-source innovation ecosystem," National People's Congress spokesman Lou Qinjian told policymakers in April.

- Startup boost -

The success of DeepSeek has galvanized China's AI scene, despite hurdles posed by rivalry with the United States and fears of a global market bubble.

Shares in two leading Chinese AI startups, Zhipu AI and MiniMax, soared on their market debuts in Hong Kong this year, and it has been a similar story for Chinese chipmakers such as MetaX.

In June, investors valued DeepSeek at more than \$50 billion in the company's first funding round, according to the Wall Street Journal.

Shi Yaqiong and her team at Beijing-based Jinqiu Capital told AFP there has been a "clear surge" in enthusiasm around Chinese AI and competition among investors since the DeepSeek shock.

- Chip smuggling reports -

DeepSeek's rise has not been without controversy. Reports, including in technology outlet The Information, say DeepSeek has been skirting a US ban on the export of top-end chips to China to train its new V4 model.

Nvidia boss criticises 'cheap' AI doomsday warnings

Berlin, Germany

AI chip giant Nvidia's boss Jensen Huang said on Thursday that warnings artificial intelligence could wipe out humanity were "cheap" attempts to grab headlines.

"When you say that it will be the end of the human civilisation, first of all, it's not true," he told a conference organised by his company in Berlin.

While such statements generate "headlines",

they were "made up" and "cheap", added Huang, whose visit to Berlin is the final stop of a European tour.

After incidents of the technology getting around controls during tests, there has been a heated debate about whether AI presents an existential risk to humanity.

In September, a researcher resigned from Anthropic with a stark warning that leading AI labs were "gambling with our lives", and the bosses of Anthropic and fellow industry giant OpenAI have called for a slowdown.

Huang, however, is firmly in the opposing camp, and has advocated for development of the technology to move full steam ahead. Speaking in Berlin, he urged

the world to approach AI with "responsible optimism".

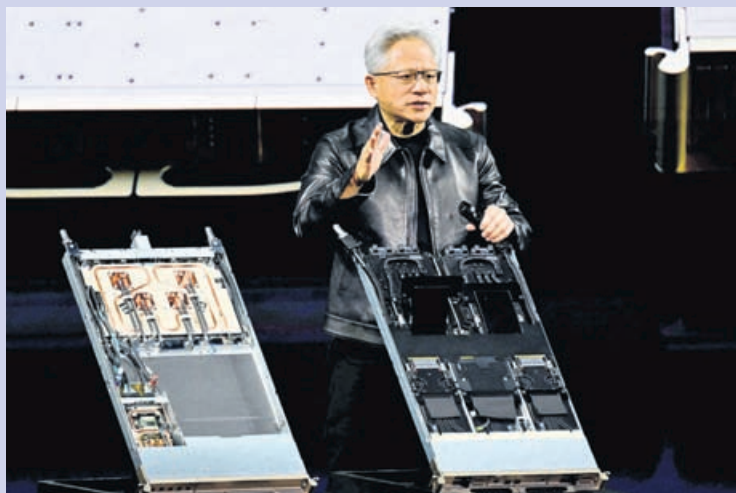
"If you care about the future, past our own lives, if we care about the future of sustainability, this is the perfect time -- build AI," he said.

"Don't try to stifle AI."

US regulators are seen as unlikely to intervene when it comes to AI development.

President Donald Trump opposes strict regulation and said in September that the US government would rename the technology "super intelligence" in official communications.

During Huang's European tour, Nvidia pledged nearly \$10 billion in investments in the continent's tech sector and urged Europe, which is lagging behind in the AI race, to move faster.



Co-founder, President and CEO of US technology company Nvidia, Jensen Huang delivers his keynote speech next to computer components during the Nvidia GTC Berlin 2026 Artificial Intelligence conference, on October 21, 2026 in Berlin.



Luka Dončić #77 of the Los Angeles Lakers dribbles upcourt during the first half of a game against the Golden State Warriors at Crypto.com Arena on October 21, 2026 in Los Angeles, California.

Luka's Lakers rout Warriors, Edwards scores 45 as T'Wolves spoil Giannis Heat debut

Los Angeles, United States

Luka Dončić scored 28 points and Walker Kessler delivered a spectacular 26 as the Los Angeles Lakers launched life after LeBron James with an emphatic 127-105 NBA victory over the Golden State Warriors on Wednesday.

Dončić, dubbed the future of the franchise when he arrived from Dallas in February 2025, starts the season as the undisputed leader of the team after superstar James's move to Philadelphia as a free agent in July. The 27-year-old Slovenian delivered a mission statement in a full-page advertisement in the Los Angeles Times on Wednesday telling fans "Tonight we start our run for a championship." He followed up with an exuberant display against a Warriors team led by 23 points from veteran Stephen Curry.

He answered some chirping from Warriors rookie Yaxel Lendeborg with a halfcourt three-pointer at the first-half buzzer, just one highlight on a night that saw the Lakers lead by as many as 35.

"It was just how everybody played," Dončić said. "I think first quarter our defense wasn't that good,

but then after that we just locked in and I think everybody had fun."

Kessler, acquired from Utah in July, made a historic Lakers debut, going a perfect 12 for 12 from the floor with 10 dunks.

"What he did today was unbelievable for us," Dončić said.

The second night of the new season featured an array of familiar faces in new places.

Minnesota star Anthony Edwards erupted for 45 points as the Timberwolves spoiled two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Giannis Antetokounmpo's Heat debut with a 131-106 triumph in Miami.

Edwards joined Hall of Famers Wilt Chamberlain and Michael Jordan as the only players with multiple 40-point season openers.

He teamed seamlessly with new arrival LaMelo Ball, added 10 rebounds and three assists. He had nine of the Timberwolves' 21 three-pointers while Ball, who joined from Charlotte this season, drilled five treys on the way to 21 points.

"At this point, me and him are gonna be like best friends," Edwards said before exchanging a beam-

ing hug with Ball.

Antetokounmpo, the former Bucks talisman who captured one championship and two Most Valuable Player awards in his 13-year tenure in Milwaukee, looked the part, connecting on 13 of 19 attempts from the floor on the way to 35 points with six rebounds.

But the Heat as a whole widely tipped as Eastern Conference contenders after landing Antetokounmpo had no answer for the Timberwolves.

In Washington, Anthony Davis made his Wizards debut nine months after he was acquired from Dallas in a blockbuster trade and spearheaded a 128-118 victory over the Bucks.

Now recovered from hand and groin injuries, Davis scored 34 points and pulled down 12 rebounds drawing chants of "MVP!" from Wizards fans who suffered through the team's league-worst 17-65 campaign last season and saw top draft pick AJ Dybantsa suffer an ankle injury in the team's pre-season finale.

Trae Young added 20 points and 13 assists in the Wizards' first season-opening win since 2022. □



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina hits a return to Armenia's Alina Charaeva during their women's singles match at the China Open tennis tournament in Beijing on October 3, 2026.

Top-ranked Rybakina into Ningbo quarter-finals on return from injury

Shanghai, China

World number one Elena Rybakina reached the quarter-finals of the Ningbo Open on Thursday on her return from injury when opponent Polina Kudermetova retired. The top seed and defending champion was cruising 5-0 in eastern China when the world number 105 from Uzbekistan called it quits because of injury.

Moscow-born Kazakh Rybakina will face Poland's unseeded Katarzyna Kawa in the last eight.

Rybakina, 27, won the U.S. Open for her third Grand Slam crown in September and usurped Aryna Sabalenka as world number one in New York.

She was then stunned in the second round in Beijing at the start of this month, and pulled out of the Wuhan Open citing a foot injury.

"Definitely not the way I wanted to finish the match," Rybakina, also the reigning Australian Open champion, said of the injury to Kudermetova.

"There is always room to improve and we'll see how the next one is going to go."

She added: "I'm just happy being here in Ningbo again, remembering the previous memories, and hoping that I can finish the year strong and be at my best."

Alexandra Eala crashed out in the last 16 as the Philippine history-maker suffered a battling straight-sets defeat to Diana Shnaider.

The Russian world number 13 won 7-5, 6-4 and will face the talented American teenager Iva Jovic in the quarter-finals.

The 21-year-old Eala in August became the first player from the Philippines to win a WTA title and is typically followed by a throng of fans from her country.

But after beating France's Diane Parry in straight sets in the previous round in Ningbo, the world number 20 came up against a far sterner test in Shnaider.

The 22-year-old Russian, who is seeking to win a sixth WTA singles title, used her superior power to take the first set in just over 50 minutes.

The second set was closer as Eala fought for survival. Shnaider put the Eala serve under severe pressure in the ninth game before breaking for 5-4, then doggedly held to seal victory in one hour and 55 minutes.

The 18-year-old Jovic defeated two-time Grand Slam finalist Jasmine Paolini of Italy 6-4, 6-3. □



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Super Bowl MVP Walker returns to Seattle with unbeaten Chiefs

Washington, United States
NFL rushing leader Kenneth Walker leads the unbeaten Kansas City Chiefs into Seattle on Sunday against ex-teammates he sparked to a Super Bowl title in February as Most Valuable Player.

Walker's return will be a focus as the reigning champion Seahawks (3-3) meet a 5-0 Chiefs squad with a revived attack after signing a three-year free agent deal with Walker worth \$45 million.

"It's going to be a special moment for him," Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes said. "You get to go back to the place where you built your career, where you won a Super Bowl."

"Those fans are the people that were around him for all of that. Those are a still a lot of the guys that were his teammates, that he grew up with as well in the NFL. "At the end of the day, you've got to win a football

game. He knows we have his back." Walker, who turned 26 on Tuesday, spent his first four NFL seasons with the Seahawks, who allowed him

to leave for Kansas City, where he has run for 665 yards and six touchdowns on 106 carries this season on an attack that tops the NFL with 414 total yards a

game. "He's doing what he did for us past bunch of seasons," Seattle safety Julian Love said. "He has picked up where he left off from last

season. "His tape looks incredible. It's all hands on deck effort to try and contain and stop him. He looks every bit of explosive as he has for the Seahawks."

The Chiefs slid to 6-11 last season after three titles and five Super Bowl appearances in six prior years but are back in contention behind Walker, who played down revenge talk.

"We've got to go critique the mistakes that we made (last week)," Walker said. "Once we get to that point, we'll see."

Chiefs coach Andy Reid sees no reason to worry about Walker's mentality against his former club. "He's wired right," Reid said. "The boys there will try to get after him a little bit, but he's a pretty level-headed guy... He has got one speed: he's coming at you. It doesn't matter who he's playing or where he's playing." □



Running back Kenneth Walker III #9 of the Kansas City Chiefs carries the ball during the game against the Los Angeles Chargers at Arrowhead Stadium on October 18, 2026 in Kansas City, Missouri.