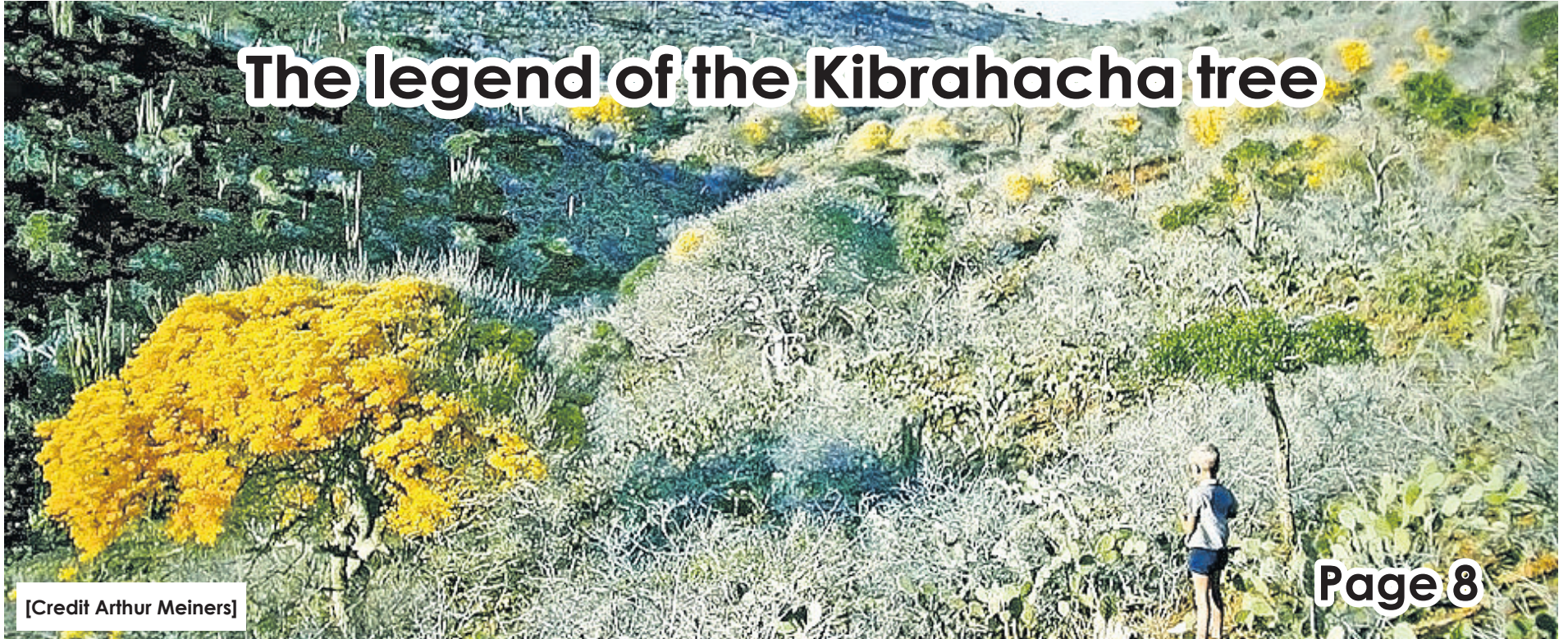




The legend of the Kibrahacha tree



[Credit Arthur Meiners]

Page 8

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Tarek Mansour, Co-Founder & CEO, Kalshi, speaks at a fireside conversation during the Economic Club of New York luncheon on October 27, 2026 in New York City.

Utah files criminal charges against prediction market Kalshi

Washington, United States

Prosecutors in the western U.S. state of Utah have filed criminal charges against prediction market Kalshi, accusing the company of running an illegal online gambling operation, court documents show. Wednesday's filing in Utah's Third Judicial District Court charges KalshiEX LLC with a pattern of unlawful activity, along with 12 counts of online gambling promotion, and one misdemeanor count of gambling promotion.

Chief executive Tarek Mansour and chief operating officer Luana Lopes Lara are listed as co-defendants.

"This is a crazy overreach; Utah is clearly playing politics," a Kalshi spokesperson told AFP. "We look forward to putting a stop to this in court, just like we did in Arizona."

Kalshi faces legal challenges in multiple U.S. states where gaming regulators have issued cease-and-desist orders or filed suits accusing the platform of operating an unlicensed gambling business.

Federal appeals courts are divided on the issue, and New Jersey has asked the U.S. Supreme Court to settle it.

The Arizona case Kalshi

cited was a 20-count criminal prosecution brought by the state in March, which a federal judge blocked in May. Arizona has since moved to revive its case.

Platforms such as Kalshi and its biggest rival Polymarket remain illegal or unregulated in most countries outside the United States. They have nonetheless become a routine presence in U.S. media and sports, with Kalshi and Polymarket striking partnerships with major news organizations and professional sports leagues such as the National Hockey League and the National Basketball Association.

The charges in Utah stem from an undercover operation in which a state investigator opened a Kalshi account under a false name in September and placed 12 wagers on professional and college sports.

According to the filing, Kalshi required the agent to confirm his location before each bet, and he truthfully reported he was in Utah. The company collected a fee on every wager, which prosecutors say amounted to proceeds from illegal gambling.

All forms of gambling are illegal in only two U.S. states: Utah and Hawaii.

The company has argued that its activities are not gambling but something closer to market trading that lets people trade on yes-or-no questions.

Kalshi sued Utah in February to block enforcement of the state's gambling laws.

A federal judge ruled against the company in August, and an appeals court refused in September to pause enforcement. The filing says Kalshi kept offering wagers in Utah after both rulings.

The criminal case follows a civil suit filed by Utah Attorney General Derek Brown on October 20, in which his office estimated Kalshi had collected \$30.6 million to \$61.2 million in fees from Utah users.

Separately, Polymarket said on social media that it had temporarily halted trading on its international platform after one of its third-party providers was compromised.

The company said it had fixed the issue, referred the matter to law enforcement and was working to bring the platform back online, adding that "anyone who has been impacted will be made whole." □



U.S. fires senior army general over alleged leaks: reports

Washington, United States

The United States has fired a top military planner, U.S. media reported, with some outlets saying the dismissal was due to the officer allegedly leaking classified information.

Army Lieutenant General Brett Sylvia was removed from his role as head of strategy, plans and policy on the Joint Staff, U.S. media reported Wednesday, citing unnamed sources.

CBS and Fox both reported that Sylvia's dismissal was related to leaks, with the former citing a Pentagon official as saying the general failed three polygraphs about sharing classified information with the media.

A spokesperson for the Joint Staff, a top Pentagon body that handles planning and other issues, initially issued a statement that confirmed Sylvia's departure and wished him well but later withdrew it, saying: "Upon further review, we determined that the statement did not appropriately reflect the full circumstances."

Pentagon spokesman Sean Parnell then said in a post on X that the Defense Department "has zero tolerance for the intentional, unauthorized disclosure of classified information" and took "necessary personnel action to protect sensitive information."

Parnell did not identify Sylvia by name and said "no further comment will be made regarding the individual or the circumstances of this action."

"This matter, along with others, have been referred to the Justice Department for potential further legal action," he added.

The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Since returning to office early last year, Trump has overseen a purge of top military personnel, including the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, general Charles "CQ" Brown, whom he fired without explanation in February 2025.

- Renewed Iran strikes? -

Other senior officers pushed out include the heads of the U.S. Army, Navy and Coast Guard, the general who headed the National Security Agency, the vice chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force, a Navy admiral assigned to NATO, and three top military lawyers.

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth has insisted the president is simply choosing the leaders he wants, but Democratic lawmakers have raised concerns about the potential politicization of the traditionally neutral U.S. military. □

Meta, Snap head to trial in another case about social media's harms

San Francisco, United States

Jury selection began on Wednesday in Los Angeles for another landmark trial about the alleged harms of social media on young users, with Meta and, for the first time, Snap as defendants.

Thousands of lawsuits have been filed in recent years in local, state and federal courtrooms across the country with various claims about alleged harms to children and teenagers caused by social media companies.

The cases the first of which went to trial earlier this year in Los Angeles have taken twists and turns.

Meta and YouTube lost the first so-called bellwether case earlier this year, when a jury found them collectively liable for harming a young user known by the initials KGM, and ordered the tech companies to pay a combined \$6 million penalty.

Meta said at the time that they "respectfully disagree" with the verdict.

Snap and TikTok settled with KGM ahead of that trial.

Months later, Snap, TikTok and YouTube settled another case that was set to go to trial in August; that



The Snapchat app logo is seen on the display of a smartphone in Munich (Bavaria, Germany) on March 7, 2026, while a finger taps on the application's icon.

plaintiff, known as RKC, then withdrew their remaining claims against Meta, allowing the Instagram and Facebook maker to avoid trial without a settlement.

TikTok and YouTube were previously named as defendants in the new case but both companies reached settlement agreements with the plaintiffs, known by their initials SJ and KDB, before the start of the trial, their lawyers said.

Meta reached a settlement agreement with one of the plaintiffs, SJ, but not KDB, according to their lawyers. A California state judge consolidated both cases into a single trial.

If no additional settlements are reached before opening statements kick off on November 4, the new trial will move forward with both Meta and Snap as defendants.

Star witnesses are expected to testify beginning mid-

November including Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg, Instagram chief Adam Mosseri, and Snap CEO Evan Spiegel.

Earlier this month, a New Mexico judge ordered Meta to pay \$25 billion in a case where the company was found liable for deceiving users in the state about how their data was used in a case related to the Cambridge Analytica scandal. A New Mexico jury previ-

ously found the social media giant liable for harms to children, leading to a combined penalty of \$942 million.

In August, Meta agreed to pay more than \$18 billion in penalties, in addition to making changes to Instagram and Facebook for teens, when it settled with 52 attorneys general several days into a trial held in California.

Part of that settlement hinged on YouTube and TikTok making similar changes to their own products, such as limiting daily screen time.

- 'Addictive and problematic' -

As regulators around the world grapple with reining in, or even banning, social media use for teens, American lawsuits have focused on allegations of addictive design and deceptive practices by social media companies.

Next month, lawyers for the two plaintiffs in Los Angeles -- SJ and KDB -- will argue that their clients were exposed to "addictive and problematic" social media apps when they started using them at 13 and 15, respectively, according to court documents. □

New York passes law restricting children's use of AI chatbots

New York, United States

The governor of New York state signed a new law Wednesday preventing minors from using AI chatbots that act as companions, in one of the broadest moves yet for restricting consumer-facing models. The law requires chatbot operators, such as OpenAI's ChatGPT, to verify the ages of users and restrict the use of certain traits by the artificial intelligence interface if the user is under 18. If used by a minor, chatbots would not be able to produce any content that could leave its user to believe it "is human, alive, or experiences human emotions," the law states.

It also cannot generate outputs that makes the

user think it "has a personal relationship, professional relationship, or an authority figure role," nor can it frame the content it produces as being a "personal opinion."

"No longer will minors have access to chatbots that pretend to be their friends, boyfriends and girlfriends," New York Governor Kathy Hochul said at a signing ceremony Wednesday.

"No longer will chatbots be able to keep sensitive information about a minor's emotional and physical health," Hochul added.

Other U.S. states including California have also passed laws restricting chatbots, but the law signed by Hochul imposes

some of the broadest language in regulating the tech, prompting backlash from AI companies.

Tech:NYC, a tech industry advocacy group for the sector in New York, criticized the "vague language" of the law.

"Keeping kids safe online should not mean cutting them off from tools that help them learn and prepare for careers," the group said in a statement. AI giants OpenAI and Anthropic did not respond to an AFP request for comment on the law.

Common Sense Media, a nonprofit advocacy group that provides guidelines for parents about media suitability for children, celebrated the bill's passage,

calling it "the strongest kids' AI safety bill in the country." "AI companies offer chatbots with features that are dangerous, and even deadly, for kids

and teens...Now, those harmful features will be outlawed in New York," Common Sense Media CEO Jim Steyer said in a statement. □

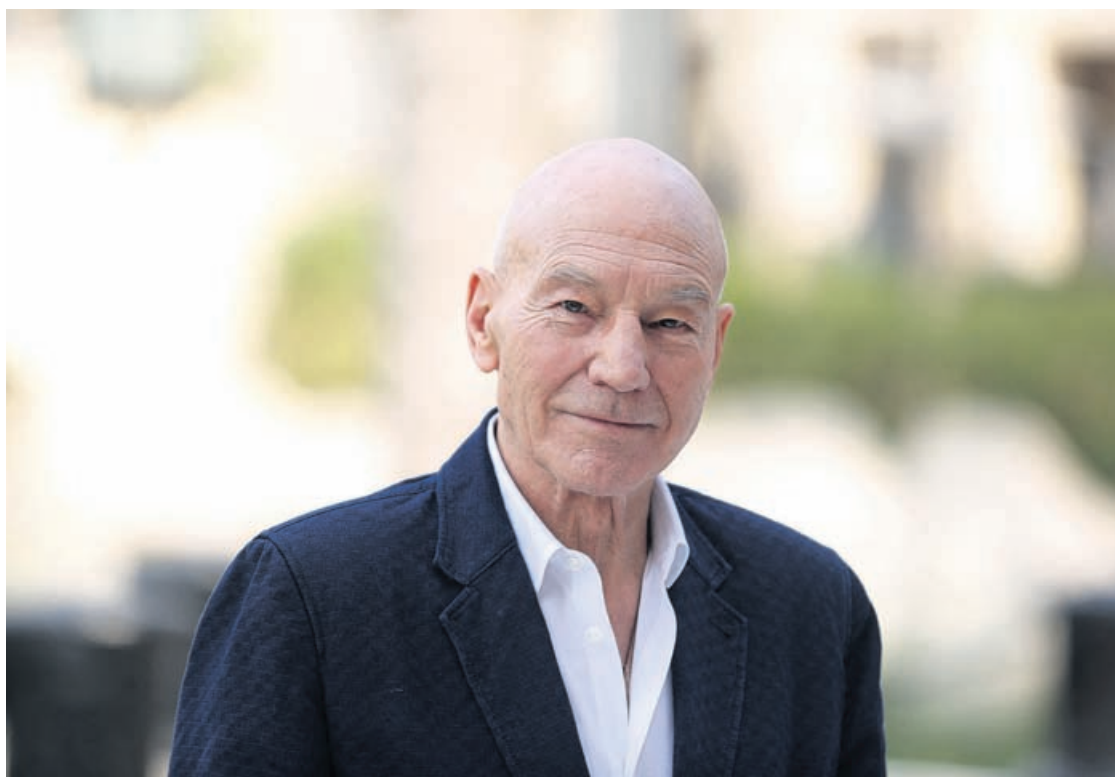


New York Governor Kathy Hochul is seen during a debate against Republican candidate Bruce Blakeman in a televised debate at the Spectrum News NY1 studios in New York on October 13, 2026.

'Star Trek', 'X-Men' star Patrick Stewart dead at 86

Los Angeles, United States
Patrick Stewart, the British Shakespearean actor who became a Hollywood mega-star through roles in the "Star Trek" and "X-Men" franchises, has died at his home in Los Angeles. He was 86.

His death on Wednesday came after a "brief and poignant journey" with Alzheimer's disease and Lewy body dementia, according to an official statement on his social media accounts. "His sonorous voice and singular talent will forever be synonymous with indelible performances in every genre," the statement said. The actor, who hailed from the northern English region of Yorkshire, trod the boards in Britain with the Royal Shakespeare Company and the National Theatre in London, and worked on British television. But he rocketed into the pop culture history books as Captain Jean-Luc Picard in "Star Trek: The Next Generation"



English actor Sir Patrick Stewart poses during a photo call at Dubai International Film Festival in Dubai on December 8, 2017.

and Professor Charles Xavier in multiple "X-Men" and related Marvel films. "He explored the human condition in all its poetic complexity and brought hope not only to the far

reaches of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, but into science fiction's most iconic final frontier aboard the Starship Enterprise," the official statement said.

- Aboard the Enterprise -
Stewart was 47 when he was cast as Picard in "Star Trek: The Next Generation," the first live-action television spinoff of the trailblazing sci-fi series from the late 1960s.

He effectively filled the boots of William Shatner's Captain Kirk from the original show, and the role became Stewart's path to fame and fortune.

Picard became known for a few catchphrases including "Make it so!" Stewart's 2023 memoir was entitled "Making It So."

But his move to America in 1987 was initially greeted with disdain by the Los Angeles Times, who wrote him off as an "unknown British Shakespearean actor."

Stewart later said he was offended by suggestions he was "slumming it" by moving into US television.

He once called his Shakespearean bona fides "nothing but a preparation for sitting in the captain's chair of the Enterprise."

- 'Gravitas and profundity' -
Stewart found further acclaim on the big screen in many films of the "X-Men" series, debuting in 2000 as Professor Charles Xavier, the founder and mentor of the mutant superhero team.

"For more than 25 years, he brought a gravitas and profundity to the role, earning fans across the globe and helping to transform Super Hero storytelling forever," Marvel Studios said Thursday. Longtime co-star Hugh Jackman, who played Wolverine, remembered Stewart as both "one of the greats of stage and screen" and "a tremendous friend and man."

From 2020 to 2023, Stewart was tempted back to the "Star Trek" franchise, starring in the "Star Trek: Picard" television series.

He was nominated for four Emmys, but never took one home.

And even as he found success in Hollywood, Stewart's love of theater, and the bard in particular, never left him. Between filming, he would return to his roots on the stage, winning two Olivier awards.

"Having spent so much of my life with Shakespeare's world, passions and ideas in my head and in my mouth, he feels like a friend, someone who just went out of the room to get another bottle of wine," he said. □

Pierce Brosnan and Helen Mirren on the joys of filming 'MobLand'

Los Angeles, United States
Pierce Brosnan and Helen Mirren have found they quite enjoy mob life, as they embody the dangerous and volatile criminal boss couple Conrad and Maeve Harrigan in "MobLand."

The second season of the series finds the Harrigans locked in a power struggle, as internal divisions and external adversaries threaten

the family. Brosnan's Conrad is impulsive yet vulnerable, confronting his own mortality after receiving a brain condition diagnosis.

Maeve, meanwhile, is maneuvering to expand her own power.

The second season of the series, which co-stars Tom Hardy and is co-directed by Guy Ritchie, premiered

in September.

"I'm having the time of my life," Brosnan told AFP in an interview.

The former James Bond actor credits screenwriter Jez Butterworth for the "orchestration" of his "clever" plot development.

"He kind of picks elements of you, or your performance from the past, and uses it within the context of the drama," Brosnan said.

To embody Conrad, 73-year-old Brosnan had a process: "You sit quietly with a cup of tea, and you read the script, and you read the script many times over."

"And you just let your imagination run free." Mirren, meanwhile, said she embraced the freedom her character offered, infusing the role with her own personal touch.

The 81-year-old has played Queen Elizabeth, Alfred Hitchcock's wife and collaborator Alma Reville,

and more recently the author Patricia Highsmith in "A Talent for Murder."

When playing real-life figures, she said: "You have to behave like a sort of detective."

The challenge is "to penetrate the psychology of a real person and reflect it as truthfully as possible," she said.

But fictional roles offer greater creative freedom, she added.

"It's fabulous for the person to be in your own imagination," Mirren said.

- 'Haunted' -

The second season of "MobLand" sees Conrad take on new dimensions.

The family patriarch's "mental acuity is definitely in doubt now," Brosnan said, "and he's haunted by the blood on his hands."

"He's haunted by the past," added Mirren, an evolution of character which adds "great color" to the story. □



English actor Helen Mirren and Irish actor Pierce Brosnan pose upon arrival for the world premiere of season two of the Paramount+ series "MobLand", in central London on September 10, 2026.

Afghanistan opium poppy cultivation surges despite Taliban govt ban: U.N.

Kabul, Afghanistan

Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan more than quadrupled in 2026 despite a Taliban government ban, the United Nations said Thursday, urging that impoverished farmers needed alternatives to the lucrative crop.

Cultivated areas reached 43,000 hectares (around 106,200 acres), up from 10,000 hectares in 2025, while estimated opium production jumped fivefold from 300 tonnes to 1,500 tonnes, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report.

Long the world's leading producer of poppies, Afghanistan was overtaken by Myanmar after a 2022 Taliban government ban crushed the trade in the country. But rampant poverty has driven some farmers to return to the trade.

"Without opium, we cannot even afford basic food," Mohammad, a 22-year-old farmer in Afghanistan's northeast, told AFP.

Afghanistan's 2022 crack-down drove cultivated areas down from more than 200,000 hectares to 10,000 hectares in 2025.

Myanmar cultivated 53,000 hectares in 2025, with no



This photograph taken on June 15, 2026 shows Afghan farmers harvesting sap from poppies in a field in Badakhshan province.

in 2026, but eradication operations were carried out before they reached maturity, reducing the remaining cultivated area to "nearly zero", the ministry told AFP. Mohammad lives with his parents in Badakhshan which has become Afghanistan's main opium poppy-growing province.

"The Taliban threaten us and do not allow us to grow opium. We cultivate it with a great deal of fear," he said, asking only to be

Mohammad said that he is threatened by the authorities and sometimes his crops are destroyed, but he will continue.

"It is the only way to cover living expenses," he said.

One hectare of wheat generated just over \$770 in 2023, compared with \$10,000 for a hectare of poppy, according to UNODC.

"Opium prices slightly decreased from US\$ 570 per kilogram in 2025 to US\$

Afghanistan faces the return of 6.6 million Afghans since 2023, climate disasters, dwindling aid and banking isolation since the Taliban movement returned to power in 2021.

With support from Japan and the European Union, UNODC has funded programmes to help farmers find alternatives.

- 'International problem' - Through the NGO Afghan Aid, Zikrullah, 35, who sup-

ports an extended family of 12 in Badakhshan, received improved wheat seeds and fertiliser.

"We're satisfied, it takes less effort than opium and we're more at ease," he told AFP, also asking to be identified only by his first name.

A third farmer named Mohammad, 30, who has converted 80 percent of his land to wheat, told AFP, that the lack of water in recent years has affected crops other than poppy.

To curb opium production sustainably, alternative crops alone are insufficient, UNODC Country Representative for Afghanistan Pol-leak Ok Serei told AFP in an interview in Kabul.

"Sustainable alternative livelihood requires more than thinking in terms of alternative crops," he said.

Farmers "need access to markets, including international markets through trades. They need infrastructure, roads, irrigation, storage".

UNODC estimated in 2025 that approach would require approximately \$500 million, but "only 10 percent" had been funded by donors and the Taliban authorities, according to Ok Serei. □

EU nations vow to release 42.6M barrels of oil after G7 pledge

Brussels, Belgium

Eleven European countries pledged Thursday to jointly release 42.6 million barrels of oil by the end of January, in line with a G7 deal struck this month to ease global energy supply concerns.

"EU member states have reaffirmed their commitment to an accelerated release of 42.6 million barrels from strategic reserves over the next months, and around half of this will be diesel," the EU's energy commissioner Dan Jorgensen told reporters. Eleven countries including France, Germany and Italy said in a statement they

would release the oil from their strategic reserves by the end of January 2027, including 20.5 million barrels of diesel.

The announcement comes weeks after the G7 economies said they would release 100 million barrels of diesel and crude oil after US President Donald Trump threatened a diesel export ban.

The other European countries involved are Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Sweden. Lithuania also endorsed the initiative, though it did not sign the

joint pledge.

The International Energy Agency to which all the EU nations belong -- made a call in mid-October for its members to step up the release of oil stocks ahead of winter.

Trump ramped up the pressure on Europe to release reserves after the US-Israeli war with Iran sent energy prices skyrocketing, coming back to bite him at home with high fuel costs that have become a key issue ahead of congressional elections next week.

The EU said it was taking the impact of the crisis on households seriously but was not worried about

supply.

"We do not expect the security of supply issue as such. But for the citizens

that are struggling to pay the bills, that might not matter," Jorgensen said. □



European Commission Executive Vice-President Teresa Ribera (L) and European Commissioner for Energy and Housing Dan Jorgensen (R) hold a joint press conference on affordable housing in Brussels, Belgium, on September 09, 2026.

Dubai building that saw city's rise from desert due for demolition

Dubai, United Arab Emirates

When it was built on the edge of the desert more than four decades ago, one 15-storey building rose proudly above what was then a quiet, unassuming Dubai.

Now appearing incongruous against a backdrop of luxury skyscrapers, the so-called Toyota Building is due for demolition, its residents having moved out a few weeks ago.

Situated near towering structures like the 163-storey Burj Khalifa, the building has witnessed Dubai's boom, growing from a city of less than 200,000 people in the 1970s into a global hub now home to more than four million people.

Hani Al-Qassem, 57, a long-time resident of Dubai, recalls: "The area (where the building stands) was once considered the gateway to the desert."

Qassem, who settled in Dubai with his family in 1974, recounts that residents used to identify the area by the so-called "Defence Roundabout" a landmark that has since evolved into an intersection leading to commercial buildings, offices and luxury hotels, as well as the glitzy Dubai Mall.

Architect and author Todd Reisz said construction of the building began in 1974, coinciding with the devel-



In this photo taken on August 27, 2026, Nasser Rashid Lootah Building, better known as the "Toyota Building", is seen at Sheikh Zayed Road in Dubai.

opment of the Dubai World Trade Centre.

He points to a photograph in his book, "Showpiece City: How Architecture Made Dubai", taken in February 1979, which shows the structure nearing completion.

- Evacuation -

The building stood in contrast with the "transformation of Sheikh Zayed Road known until the 1990s as Abu Dhabi Road -- into the major spine organising development in Dubai", Reisz said.

Originally named the "Nasser Rashid Lootah" build-

ing, it became associated with Japanese carmaker Toyota when it installed its red advertising sign there in 1981, displaying the company's name in English.

Today, while the structure appears dated when compared to the skyscrapers around it, some see it as a rare link to a past Dubai that has all but disappeared. The Nasser Rashid Lootah Group, which manages the property, previously informed local media of the decision to demolish it by 2027. It declined to respond to requests for comment from AFP.

Himanshu, 29, who lived in

the building for three years before being forced to vacate recently, said the decision came as a surprise.

"Suddenly, the authorities came and they cut off the electricity. It has been a very hard time for us. We don't know anything," he said.

Dubai attracts millions of visitors annually as well as workers from all around the world.

The city's image as a safe haven in a tumultuous region took a hit during the Middle East war, with Iran striking some of its major landmarks.

Reisz notes that since the

turn of the century, the Toyota Building has been "inhabited by some of the city's less wealthy residents and largely South Asian, as the surrounding area was marked for much more luxurious development".

From his modest room, Himanshu enjoyed an unobstructed view of Burj Khalifa, all while paying a monthly rent of 1,600 dirhams (approximately \$430) a far cry from the typical rental prices in the neighbourhood, often up to five times higher.

Jacques Brent, the managing director of the Al-Futtaim Toyota retailer, notes that the building's "prominent location provided an exceptional opportunity to showcase the billboard".

He told AFP that for many, landmarks like the Toyota Building are "linked to an earlier era of Dubai".

- 'Very special building' -

But it is a final relic of a history that is rapidly disappearing. "It was a very special building for me," said Himanshu, who founded a travel agency.

"This building is part of my professional journey also. I started my business from this building."

The building's evacuation coincides with efforts by authorities to crack down on illegally partitioned rooms and overcrowding. □

Bugatti CEO to stop leaving keys inside cars after Chiron theft

Zagreb, Croatia

The Croatian CEO of Bugatti vowed on Thursday to stop leaving keys inside

cars after his multi-million-dollar Chiron was stolen and recovered in Austria with him chasing the thief

in a Porsche.

Mate Rimac's car with a base price of 2.4 million euros (\$2.7 million) was stolen on Wednesday from the company's production and technology campus near Zagreb.

"I got it back obviously," Rimac said on Instagram speaking in front of the vehicle.

"I'm so proud of Croatia being so safe that I'm very relaxed, meaning I always leave my keys inside my cars, including Chiron and Nevera.

"I do that for years and nothing ever happened of course until something did happen now, so I will not do that anymore and

don't try your luck", the 38-year-old added.

The theft was discovered after someone warned employees that an unknown person had driven off in the Chiron.

Rimac immediately contacted police used the car's telemetry system to track its location as it travelled towards Slovenia and set off in his Porsche 911 in hot pursuit.

Updates were shared with police in a group chat, helping Austrian officers locate and arrest the suspect.

The suspect, whom Rimac met at a police station in Austria, is a Croatian man

in his mid-30s.

The man explained that he had come to the company looking for a job and took the car after seeing the keys inside.

Though Rimac does not intend to press charges, he warned the suspect would be prosecuted due to the car's high value.

"Just the fact that he stole a Bugatti and especially this one told me that this guy has problems," Rimac said. The car sustained some damage but will be repaired.

Bugatti is part of Bugatti Rimac, a joint venture in which Croatia's Rimac Group holds a 55 percent stake. □



This photograph shows the Bugatti Chiron sport car at the 91st edition of the international Paris Motor Show at the Porte de Versailles in Paris on October 12, 2026.

Why 'Rock Stacking' is more dangerous than you think

(Oranjestad)—“Rock stacking” is not illegal in Aruba, but its impact on nature is harmful as the stones form part of the natural habitat of small animal species living in Aruba’s wilderness. Conservation organizations repeatedly warn people not to participate. To understand the growing opposition to the practice of stacking rocks, it is necessary to understand the deep and negative impact behind it.

The act, called rock stacking, has been practiced for thousands of years and was originally used to guide people on hikes or travelers in mountainous regions, as well as for rituals, burials, and memorials. However, the modern trend is quite different. Today, the popularity of rock stacking has less to do with utility and tradition and more to do with social media. An American artist based in Colorado, Michael Grab, noted that the trend really began gaining popularity around 2014 and 2015, before it exploded and became an international art form.

The reasons behind participation vary widely, ranging from something purely practical or a tradition from the past, to an activity for its “beauty.” For many, it is about leaving a mark, creating “art,” or simply enjoying the process of balancing rocks. In recent times,



those who participate in this—especially in Aruba—do so to leave proof of their presence or simply to post on social media.

Although it may seem harmless, there are several problems and negative impacts behind it. One of these is that many animal species hide under rocks to live, reproduce, or escape predators. If you move a rock, you may be destroying a home. If you stack one on top of another, you may expose prey to predators. Whether this is done in nature areas, along the coast, or in desert environments, it can destroy entire colonies and, in the worst case, threaten species that are already endangered.

There are microorganisms and small species such as insects or certain snakes that live in the soil beneath rocks commonly used for stacking. These rocks help trap moisture underneath, allowing the ecosystem to sustain itself. When you remove a rock, the soil is exposed and the moisture can dry up, killing all living organisms that depend on that humid environment.

Additionally, each rock is full of life—everything from aquatic plants to microorganisms attaches to them. Especially when it comes to rocks near the sea, they create habitats for some marine animals. Holes in the rocks can hold eggs, supporting them until the animals hatch. An expert explained that removing rocks from a fragile environment is essentially the equivalent of removing bricks from someone's

house while also taking everything out of their refrigerator.

There is also the issue of erosion and soil damage, because rocks help hold the ground in place, sealing the surface and helping manage excess water, even allowing new life to grow. When these rocks are removed, the soil becomes loose, significantly increasing the rate of erosion in that area.

This erosion can cause sedimentation in nearby bodies of water, negatively impacting aquatic habitats and water quality.

Rocks along the coast are part of a natural ecosystem and play an important role in protecting the shoreline from erosion and the force of the ocean. When people remove or stack rocks, it affects coastal stability, increases the risk of erosion, and damages ecosystems. According to South African National Parks, this is particularly relevant for an island like Aruba—especially considering that most, if not all, rock stacking on the island takes place near coastal areas.

It is understandable that rock stacking may seem like a fun activity to do while off-roading; however, the survival, protection, and conservation of the island are just as important—if not more so—to ensure that in the future there will still be an island for both locals and visitors. We want our visitors to appreciate what Aruba has to offer—in a healthy and sustainable way. □

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Birds of Aruba



ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their

preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundation's Facebook page.

The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July.

This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm. Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.

Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top

pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory. English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male) Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).

Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect. □

Picture credit: Aruba Birdlife Conservation.



The legend of the Kibrahacha tree

ORANJESTAD—The Kibrahacha is a famous tree known locally for its bright, yellow flowers that blooms for just three days. Scientifically known as *Tabebuia billbergii*, and in English as the Yellow Poui, this tree is native to the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao, and is considered among locals as one of the most spectacular trees on the island. But did you also know that the beautiful yellow flowers have a story behind them?

The Kibrahacha is said to have extremely hard wood—so hard that it can break an axe. In fact, that's what its name means in Papiamentu: "kibra" (break) "hacha" (axe). The flowers bloom around April and May, but this only last for about three days, as the flowers start to fall off and the tree starts growing its green leaves. The Kibrahacha is especially particular, as it's the only one among its

neighboring trees to starts blooming first.

The legend of the Kibrahacha

Written by Hubert (Lio Booi)

One day Aterima, who lived west of the hill Sero Warawara, woke up one day to find her father sleeping in his hammock, suffering a bout of terrible fever. Her mother was very worried, and as was the custom in the olden days, asked Aterima to go fetch Kudawecha, who was a epistemophile, to come see his father.

Aterima wasted to time and went to go fetch Kudawecha. Upon telling Kudawecha that her father was sick, he immediately accompanied Aterima back to her hut, where he encountered her father in a bad state. Not willing to waste any time, he told Aterima that the only thing that can cure her father is a home-made potion made out of the Kibrahacha flower. At the time the Kibrahacha was not yet in her blooming season, but the stubborn Kudawecha was determined to bring back Aterima's father back to health, and so off they went to the nearest Kibrahacha tree.

When they arrived at the tree, they saw that it was covered head to toe in thorns, with only a few closed flowers at the very top. Kudawecha, experienced veteran in all things Aruban flora

and fauna, told Aterima to start plucking the thorns of the tree to climb to the top where the flowers are. Aterima, just as determined to save her father, didn't hesitate to start.

To her surprise, every time she plucked a thorn of the tree, a bright, yellow flower bloomed in its place. The thorns were hard to pluck out, but Aterima continued plucking with enthusiasm and wonder at the unfolding sight before her. Not too long after she was able to fill her entire satchel with the yellow flowers.

Kudawecha, satisfied to see Aterima so happy and encouraged to help her father, took her back to her hut.

Upon arriving back at the hut, Aterima's mother quickly made a tea out of the flowers and gave it to her sick husband. Miraculously, after just one sip of the tea, the father's fever left his body immediately, and he opened eyes and sprung up feeling new.

The next morning, they all visited the same Kibrahacha tree that saved the life of Aterima's father and they saw another miracle. The tree was covered again in the same bright, yellow flowers, with not a thorn in sight. And as the legend goes, from that day on, the Kibrahacha tree no longer produced any more thorns. □



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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.

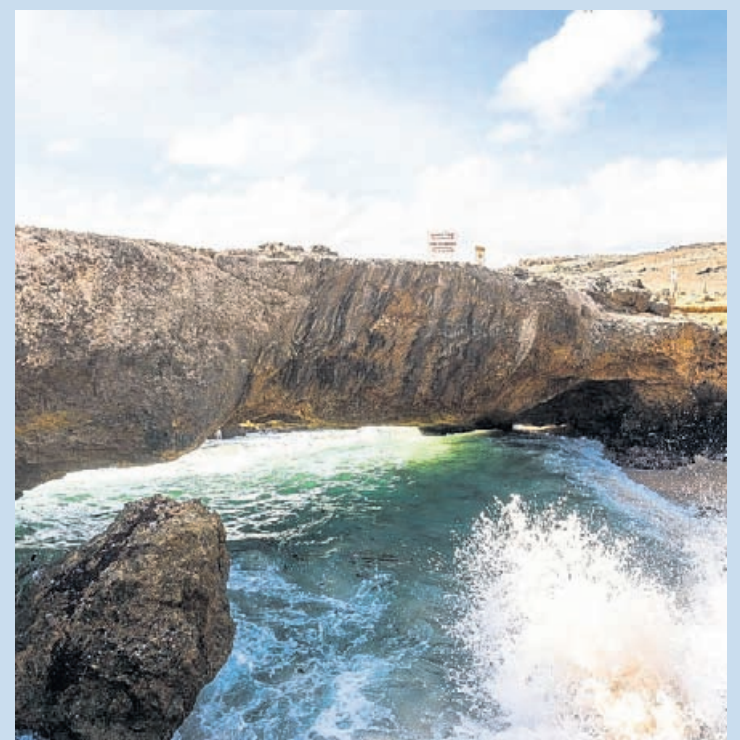
Patrick also shares the origins of lionfish in the Caribbean Sea. It is theorized that the introduction of these fish in the Atlantic happened in Florida, where people would buy lionfish from across the world to keep in their aquariums. However, lionfish grow, and as these buyers realized that the fish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



Visit the natural bridges of Aruba!



(Oranjestad)—After you've visited the Alto Vista Church, the Bushiribana Gold Mill Ruins and the mini natural pool that is located right next to it, you're next up around the northern coast line must be the Natural Bridge. Once the largest natural bridge in the Caribbean, this bridge has been a tourist attraction for many years.

The bridge was formed during thousands of years, cut and crafted by the wild waves that crash into the coral stone walls of the coast. Before its collapse, this bridge measured 30 meters in length and 7 meters in height, making it the biggest natural bridge in the Caribbean at the time. For many years, this site was also a frequently visited beach, as the bridge had a small opening through which the water would flow into the tiny beach.

Unfortunately in 2005, the bridge collapsed, and the little beach dried up. Despite this, this site remained a tourist attraction, with many visitors walking along the coral cliffs of the bridge to see the spectacular view of the northern coastline and the Caribbean Sea. Visitors can also still visit the souvenir shop on the left of the bridge entrance.

While the natural bridge no longer is functional, there is now a smaller natural bridge very close. This bridge is often called the "Baby Bridge" or "Daughter Bridge". □

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our “Dorado”

(Oranjestad)—If you’re ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can’t recognize. One of these may be the “Dorado”, a common fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba. Here’s some information about the beloved Dorado.

Dorado has many different names it can be referred to. Dral, Dorao, Drals, Drado, are some of them in Papiamentu. In English, it is also called Mahi Mahi, Dolphinfish, or Dorado. It’s a good example to reflect on why there can be many names. The same fish becomes known by different common names, why? Common names come only when a group of people, to understand each other, assign a name to a fish. Mahi Mahi, for example, comes from Hawaii and means “very strong”. Dorado is based on Spanish and refers to the golden yellow color that the fish shines with under the sun. Why it’s called Dolphinfish



in English is not well defined and while there are several stories around this, none have been confirmed.

Dorado is found in all tropical to subtropical oceans around the world. Dorado is very popular both for recreational fishing and for consumption. It is known among fishermen as an

exciting catch and a fish that puts up a good fight. Its meat is very good for consumption and it is also commercially fished for that reason.

They grow very fast, up to 2.7 inches (almost 7 cm) per week. They can live up to a maximum of 5 years although very few reach that

age. Most become adults within 1 year but many become reproductive after just 5 or 6 months and reproduce very quickly too. They live in open water on the surface most of the time. Many fish seek them around sushi lines or floating objects on the sea. Often you will find a group landing together and if you

keep a male on the line, often the others will stay close or can keep the group interested by giving shrimp or squid.

Description:

Dorado has a distinctive body. It has a large tail and its long, flat body ends in a large blunt head. Its color of yellow and green or blue makes it immediately recognizable, even with small variations in these colors.

Dorado has clear differences between adult females and males. The male is larger and can easily reach 50 to 80 pounds and has a much flatter head compared to the female. Therefore, male Dorados are also called “bull Dorado”.

Dorado can be found in our waters around the island all year round, but there are periods when it is easier to find than others. □

Source: The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries (Santa Rosa).

Lessons from our elders: Plants and fruits for medicinal use



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

Sweet potato

According to our elders, sweet potato is mostly useful for low blood pressure. People who suffer from low blood pressure were advised to eat sweet potato 2 to 3 times a week. However, if you have high blood pressure, it is best not to eat too much sweet potato, as this raises blood pressure. Sweet potatoes are also great for people who work hard labor jobs, and it’s been said to be aid blood circulation in the body, as well as help those with hemorrhoids or diarrhea.



Many of our elders opted to plant sweet potatoes themselves, mostly because of how easy it was to do so. Cut the end of a sweet potato let it sit in shallow water until it starts to sprout. Then you may plant it in the ground. Sweet potatoes need plenty of water to grow, especially in the first week in the ground. It was said that once you start to notice the ground crack underneath the flowers, it is time to harvest. This should happen around month 3.

Pomegranate

Pomegranates are also one of the easier fruits to plant and harvest. Originated from Persia, this plant can grow almost everywhere. In Aruba, there are many homes that have a tiny or big pomegranate tree. You may be wondering what the difference is between a small and big pomegranate tree, for which the answer is based on harvest time. Tiny trees produce tinier pomegranates that can be har-

vested early on. Contrarily, big trees produce bigger pomegranates, but they need enough time to fully ripen before harvesting, otherwise you might end up with bitter seeds. Pomegranate trees are also very easy to plant. In essence, if you just throw the seeds on the ground, they could grow into a tree.

In terms of medicinal use, pomegranate skins are said to have a few benefits for our health. According to customs, pomegranate skin tea can help those that suffer from diarrhea. Dried pomegranate skin tea is also good for people who have worms. Pomegranate flowers can be boiled to make a drink and this can be used for irritated gums; just take a swig and let the tea sit in your mouth for a couple minutes. □

Source: Remedi i Kustumber di nos Bieunan (Medicine and Customs of our Elderly) by Dinah Veeris

Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now

(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the same, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experiences by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.



Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in

response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piterella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works.

The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that

of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness in the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing

works in our native tongue, Papiamentu, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/ Dera Gay (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □

Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas



CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1. Shaving mishap
5. Aspirin target
9. Different
11. Joust wear
13. Portland setting
14. Copy for pasteup
15. Completely
16. Tailors' inserts
18. Served a sentence
20. Sturgeon eggs
21. Victor
22. Start of a German count
23. Bonanza stuff
24. Important age
25. Yard part
27. Mans the buckets
29. Wrap up
30. Revolutionary arms
32. Fate
34. Artist Jean
35. Manual readers
36. Place in order
38. Wine grape
39. Brawl

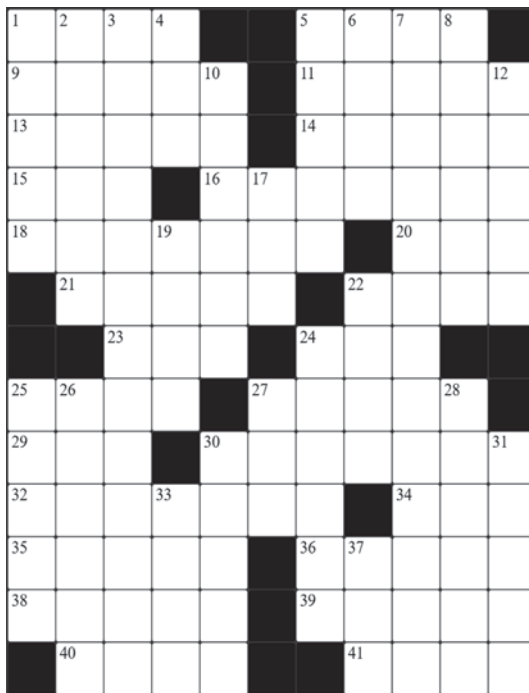
40. Water whirl
41. Action star Jackie

DOWN

1. Wanderer
2. Tilted type
3. Arthur C. Clarke novel
4. Filmmaker Burns
5. Analyze grammar
6. Son of Zeus
7. Arthur C. Clarke novel
8. Kramden's pal
10. Ruling group
12. Valentine's outfit gift
17. Game holder
19. Pucker-inducing
22. Composer Satie
24. Cake courses
25. Disgusted
26. Infant button letters



Yesterday's answer



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.

10-28

CRYPTOQUOTE

QI CIOFRCA OHK ROPI UOVI ZJ
A ZYVDIFJ, QYR QI COBBA
XMR C RCI QIOYRMJYF
RCMHTD RCOR LOPI AZY AZY.

---QIAZHUI

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: LIFE IS SHORT, AND IT'S UP TO YOU TO MAKE IT SWEET. --- SADIE DELANEY

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.

found in homes and establishments.

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

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

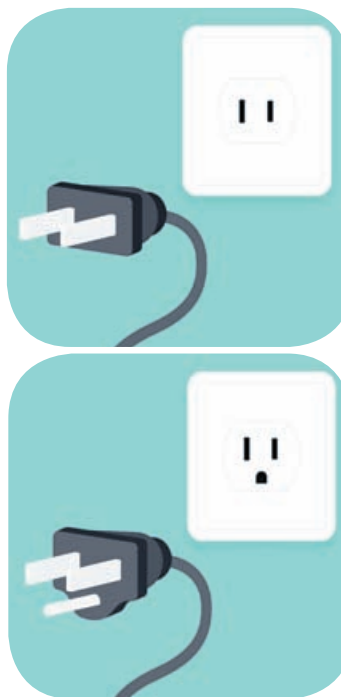
Supermarket hours may vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or

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.

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



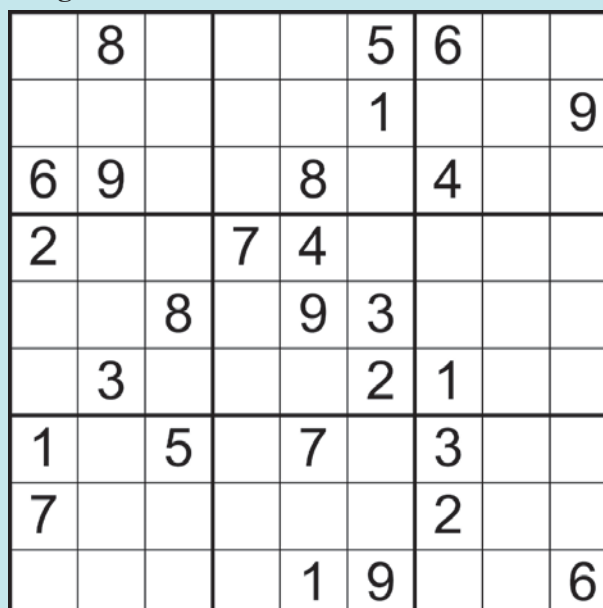
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SUDOKU

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: ★★★★★

10/30

Answer to previous puzzle

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

Difficulty: ★★★

10/29

Nations accused of undermining science at U.N. nature talks

Yerevan, Armenia

Political tensions are mounting in the final days of the United Nations biodiversity talks with a handful of countries accused of trying to weaken the science that underpins global nature policy.

The growing feud over the role of science has alarmed veteran negotiators and follows recent efforts by fossil fuel-reliant nations to delay reports by the IPCC, the global authority on climate change.

"The same thing is happening here as what is taking place with the IPCC," said a French government delegate at the COP17 summit in Yerevan, Armenia. The delegate requested anonymity to discuss ongoing negotiations.

The delegate said four countries Saudi Arabia, Russia, Argentina and Brazil were frustrating progress.

The pushback is directed at two scientific assessments by the UN-backed IPBES biodiversity panel on the overlap between the nature and climate crises and the economic forces driving them.

Nearly 200 nations were due to agree how these landmark findings should guide efforts to protect nature but some countries "did not want to acknowledge them", the French delegate added.

A negotiator from another developed nation told AFP these four countries were also leading this push.

"There is a clear alliance of Russia, Saudi, Argentina and, to some extent, Brazil all working together to try to water down IPBES reports, not welcome them, or use them as bargaining chips in other negotiation items," the negotiator said on condition of anonymity.

- Setting precedent -

Much of the dispute boils down to a few paragraphs of text in a draft agreement and whether countries should "welcome" or "take note" of the IPBES



findings.

The latter phrasing is considered far weaker in the language of U.N. negotiations, where every word is closely scrutinized.

The current draft was "a text without ambition", said the French delegate. "If we no longer have a scientific basis to work from, then everything we discuss here is merely a matter of opinion," the delegate added.

Academics and civil society activists at COP17 have already issued a joint statement of concern at the state of negotiations. When approached by AFP in Yerevan, IPBES chair David Obura declined to comment as the talks were

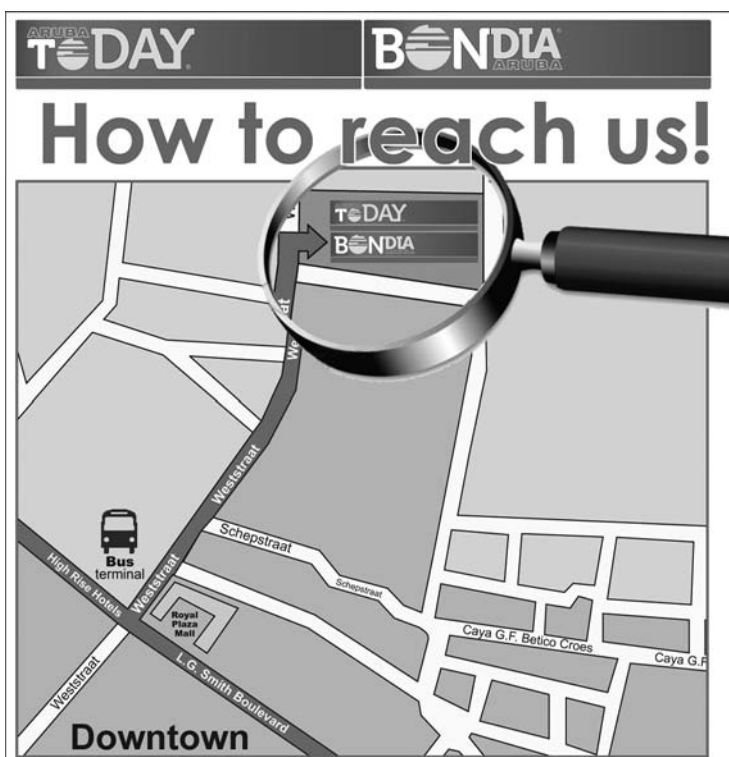
still ongoing.

Although the summit is due to end Friday, a number of outstanding matters including around the science remain unresolved. The dispute echoes a growing pattern in consensus-based global negotiations, where oil-producing countries are accused of frustrating efforts to tackle fossil fuels, plastic trash and other environmental harm.

Climate science has long been a flashpoint and the IPCC is currently deadlocked, as countries including Saudi Arabia and India push to delay publication of its next set of benchmark reports on global warming. In an unprecedented decision last year, a crucial

summary of the Global Environment Outlook, a flagship UN scientific report, was torpedoed as nations rowed over fossil fuels.

"We've pretty much always seen IPCC reports being politicized..." said the negotiator from the developed country. □



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San Nicolas
IMSAN
24 HOURS
Tel. 524 8833

PHARMACY ON DUTY

Oranjestad: Eagle

Tel. 587 9011

San Nicolas: Centro Medico
Tel. 584 5794

OTHER

Dental Clinic 587 9850
Blood Bank Aruba 587 0002
Urgent Care 586 0448
Walk-In Doctor's Clinic 588 0539

EMERGENCY

Police 100
Police Oranjestad 527 3140
Police Noord 527 3200
Police Sta. Cruz 527 2900
Police San Nicolas 584 5000
Police Tipline 11141
Ambulance 911
Fire Dept. 115
Red Cross 582 2219

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FAVI- Visually Impaired
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Alcoholics Anonymous
Tel. 736 2952
Narcotics Anonymous
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Microsoft beats expectations fueled by Azure cloud business

San Francisco, United States

Microsoft shares popped more than five percent Wednesday afternoon after it reported better than expected revenue and profit, fueled by its Azure cloud computing division which grew by 48 percent in the September quarter. "We are delivering greater capability, choice, control, and cost efficiency for customers across our entire stack," Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said in a statement.

The technology giant recorded \$92.3 billion in total revenue and more than \$36.6 billion in profit, the company said in a securities filing Wednesday.

Analysts had expected around \$90.6 billion in revenue and \$35.1 billion in profit, according to FactSet.

The quarterly earnings report comes just days after Microsoft offered voluntary buyouts to about 60,000 employees, roughly a quarter of its workforce, as the



The Microsoft Azure logo appears on a smartphone screen in this illustration photo in Reno, United States, on December 23, 2024.

tech giant spends heavily on artificial intelligence investments.

It's the second voluntary buyout offer that Microsoft has offered employees this year, after giving seven

percent of its U.S. workforce the option to retire early in April.

Microsoft had 223,000 employees globally at the end of June, down from 228,000 at the end of 2025, accord-

ing to regulatory filings.

Earlier this month, Microsoft also announced a new Surface Ultra laptop that runs on Nvidia's artificial intelligence chips and will cost more than \$2,500.

The launch is part of a broader push by tech companies to release hardware that can handle more AI computing on-device and offline, so users do not have to rely solely on remote cloud data centers, where running AI is slower and more expensive.

- AI spending -

One of the big questions looming over tech earnings is whether the industry's heavy AI spending is paying off.

Analysts are expecting \$51 billion in overall spending by Microsoft from July to September, according to FactSet.

Microsoft nearly doubled its spending on "property and equipment" to \$39 billion compared to the same period last year, according to a press release.

The company added 24 new data centers across the world last quarter, Nadella said on a call with analysts Wednesday afternoon.

Its overall capital expenditures reached \$45.2 billion, around three-quarters of which was spent on "short-lived assets" like memory chips and storage, Chief Financial Officer Amy Hood said.

In the final quarter of 2026, Microsoft expects capital expenditures to reach more \$50 billion, which will bring its total spending for the year to \$170 billion, she said.

Microsoft competes with Amazon Web Services (AWS) and Google parent Alphabet for cloud computing services customers. AWS has dominated the sector and remained number one globally by revenue in the second quarter of the year, according to Synergy Research Group.

Microsoft is number two globally, followed by Google.

However, Google on Wednesday reported that revenue from its cloud division doubled to \$30.7 billion during the quarter, bringing it closer to Microsoft's Azure revenue, which reached \$33.2 billion in the same period. □

Canada buying stake in AI firm Cohere to bolster tech sovereignty

Montreal, Canada

Canada is investing CAN\$1.6 billion (\$1 billion) in the AI firm Cohere, Prime Minister Mark Carney said Thursday, a move aimed at strengthening sovereign alternatives to counter US and Chinese AI dominance. Cohere was founded in Toronto in 2019 and has tried to distinguish itself from artificial intelligence behemoths like OpenAI

and Anthropic by focusing on models built for businesses and governments, with less attention paid to consumer applications. Announcing the investment ahead of a major Canada-EU summit in Montreal, Carney said "this is the moment that will decide where AI is built, how AI is governed, and who AI serves."

"We are not waiting for the

future of AI to be decided somewhere else by those we don't know or by those we don't trust," he added. The concentration of AI systems in the hands of a few companies carries systemic risks, the prime minister said, warning that while those companies may profess to be "global," they "often prove national in the breach."

- Tech you 'can trust' -

Cohere is led by Aidan Gomez, an AI researcher who co-authored a seminal paper that laid the foundations for modern AI systems, underscoring the role of the Canadian AI research ecosystem in the field's development.

The company has already moved to make itself a transatlantic power insulated from US and Chinese control.

In May, Cohere announced a deal to acquire German AI firm Aleph Alpha, creating a combined entity with dual headquar-

ters in Toronto and Berlin, in a deal backed by Ottawa and Berlin.

Gomez told AFP in June that Europe risks "total technological irrelevance" if it fails to develop sovereign capabilities, warning that without home-built technology, everything from defense to productivity will be partly controlled by foreigners.

At Carney's announcement on Thursday, Gomez said the federal investment is part of a funding round targeting CAN\$7 billion, which would take the company to a CAN\$35.7 billion valuation.

"We are now the largest AI company outside the United States and China," Gomez said.

"Around the world, organizations are looking for technology that they can trust and control, and that reflects their values," he added, pledging that Cohere would be rooted "in Canada always." □



European Council President Antonio Costa, Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen attend a roundtable with business leaders during the 21st EU-Canada summit in Montreal, Quebec, Canada on October 29, 2026.



The Milwaukee Brewers celebrate with Trevor Megill #29 after defeating the Tampa Bay Rays in the 2026 World Series at Tropicana Field on October 28, 2026 in St Petersburg, Florida.

Brewers beat Rays 4-1 to capture first World Series title

Miami, United States

The Milwaukee Brewers won the first World Series title in franchise history on Wednesday, beating the Tampa Bay Rays 4-1 to clinch victory in Major League Baseball's championship showcase.

Rookie shortstop Cooper Pratt drove in one run, plated another with a sacrifice fly and scored as the Brewers denied a sweep by the Rays' thrilling extra-innings comeback win on Tuesday celebrated a four games to one victory in the best-of-seven series at Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, Florida.

Milwaukee's first World Series title comes 44 years after their only other trip to the Fall Classic, when they lost to St. Louis in seven games in 1982.

"This is one of the greatest moments of my life. Oh my gosh," said the 22-year-old Pratt, who made his major league debut in June. "It doesn't even feel real. This is surreal."

The Brewers, who swept the defending champion Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League Championship Series, gained an early 1-0 edge on Pratt's single

to center field that scored Brice Turang in the top of the second inning.

Pratt was cut down trying to reach second base and the Rays escaped the inning without further damage.

Pratt singled again his sixth hit in six straight at-bats and scored on David Hamilton's single up the middle as the Brewers doubled their lead in the top of the fifth.

Milwaukee added two more runs for a 4-0 lead in the sixth, when Rays reliever Garrett Cleavinger hit Christian Yelich to open the inning.

William Contreras followed with a double to left field that scored Yelich.

Contreras, who drove in four runs in the series, was named World Series Most Valuable Player, the third Venezuelan to earn the award.

- Misorowski shines on mound -

After Turang belted a single, Tyler Wells took the mound for Tampa Bay. He struck out Sal Frelick before Pratt lofted a sacrifice fly to right field that allowed Contreras to score.

Milwaukee's flame-throwing pitching ace Jacob Misorowski, who led the

major leagues with 252 strikeouts in the regular season, recorded just two.

But the pitcher almost certain to win the National League Cy Young Award hurled five and two-thirds scoreless innings, giving up just two hits before exiting with apparent leg cramps.

"I don't even have words. It's amazing, just watching my guys celebrate," Misorowski said. "I know they're going crazy in Milwaukee. It's awesome."

Misorowski didn't get his first strikeout of the game until the fourth inning.

He then gave up a two-out single to Chandler Simpson, who reached second on a fielding error by Sal Frelick as Liam Hicks -- who had reached first when he was hit by a Misorowski pitch -- advanced to third.

Misorowski escaped the jam when Ben Williamson grounded out to third to strand the Rays runners in scoring position.

Brewers fans were a raucous presence at Tropicana Field. Pratt said the expectations added to the pressure and the satisfaction.

"It's loud, it's crazy. The pressure is out of this world," he said. □



Japan's Naomi Osaka serves to Slovakia's Mia Pohankova during the WTA Pan Pacific Open tennis tournament at Ariake Coliseum in Tokyo on October 29, 2026.

Osaka vows to return stronger after Tokyo exit

Tokyo, Japan

Former world number one Naomi Osaka said she would "keep attempting" to get back to her Grand Slam-winning best after her season ended with a second-round exit in Japan on Thursday.

The four-time Grand Slam champion lost 6-3, 7-5 to Slovakian 18-year-old Mia Pohankova, ranked 144 in the world, at the Pan Pacific Open in Tokyo.

Osaka has not won a title this year and has not reached a Grand Slam final since she returned to tennis after a 15-month break following the birth of her daughter Shai in 2023.

The 29-year-old, now ranked 18 in the world, said she was "at peace" with herself and feeling good about her game.

"Obviously when I play a Slam, it's in my mind to challenge for it," she said.

"Unfortunately I haven't been in that position yet, and I'm going to keep attempting it.

"But if you're asking me how I think my tennis is, I think it's pretty good."

Osaka was appearing at the Pan Pacific Open for the first time in four years.

She came out onto the court wearing a red kimono-style gown with a long frilly train.

She said she chose the colour as a contrast to the blue crane-pattern outfit she wore in her opening match this week.

Osaka said she had more outfits lined up for the Tokyo crowd but "unfortunately" would not have a chance to wear them after exiting the tournament.

Osaka is known for grabbing headlines with her flamboyant custom-made outfits.

She channelled NBA fashion trailblazer Allen Iverson at the U.S. Open and wore an audacious "jellyfish-inspired" outfit in Australia.

She also drew on her Japanese heritage with a kimono-inspired white dress at Wimbledon.

"There are so many things that go on in my mind, and it was just a creative outlet," she said.

"All the other sports are allowed to do that, and tennis is more subdued and restrained."

Osaka started the match with an ace, but former junior Wimbledon champion Pohankova soon turned the tables on her.

The Slovakian, who said she grew up watching Osaka, broke her opponent three times to take the first set and kept the momentum going to win the match. □



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Miami Heat earn first win of NBA season with Antetokounmpo

Los Angeles, United States
The Miami Heat finally earned their first win since the start of the season and the arrival of superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo, defeating the Atlanta Hawks 129-117 on Wednesday. The Greek two-time NBA Most Valuable Player had been expected to immediately propel Miami into the ranks of Eastern Conference contenders, but his first victory in a Heat uniform came at the fifth time of asking.

Antetokounmpo, who had a triple-double in defeat to the Dallas Mavericks two nights earlier, again racked up impressive numbers, with 24 points and 18 rebounds. This time he was backed up by teammates Bam Adebayo, who scored 24 with nine rebounds, and Andrew Wiggins who added 18 points.

Former Milwaukee Bucks star Antetokounmpo

reached 1,000 career steals, while Adebayo became the Heat's all-time leading rebounder, surpassing the record of 5,791 previously held by Udonis

Haslem. "I can't really put it into words, man. I just wish I could have did it at the crib," Adebayo said at Atlanta's State Farm Arena.

The star-packed Philadelphia 76ers bounced back from Sunday's disappointing loss against Detroit to move to 4-1 with a 114-109 victory in a back-and-forth

clash with the Indiana Pacers.

LeBron James and the Sixers struggled to see off Indiana, which this week announced it would be without star Tyrese Haliburton for around two weeks due to a hamstring injury.

The Sixers fell behind in a lop-sided third quarter, but rallied down the final stretch to seal the road victory.

Tyrese Maxey scored 17 of his 27 points in a blistering fourth quarter showing to spare his team's blushes. James managed just 13 points but added 10 assists, while Joel Embiid had 21 points and 11 rebounds, and Jaylen Brown provided 20 points.

"JB and (Embiid) and Bron kind of got on me not being aggressive the first three quarters. When JB checked back in the game in the 4th quarter he said 'you owe us, take us home,'" said Maxey. □



Giannis Antetokounmpo #7 of the Miami Heat dunks against Jock Landale #31 of the Atlanta Hawks during the second quarter at State Farm Arena on October 28, 2026 in Atlanta, Georgia.