

# 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



Supplement of The Daily Herald  
Wednesday, December 31st, 2024.

## JANUARY

2024 began with anticipation for the Parliamentary elections on January 11. The leaders of the eight political parties vying in the elections convened at the Belair Community Centre on January 3 to articulate their respective visions for the future of St. Maarten. This public debate was broadcast live. All parties, cognisant of the urgent need for change, emphasised their commitment to economic development and tax reforms as pivotal strategies to augment essential revenues for the government. The shared goal was to leverage these resources to enhance the quality of education on the island and ensure equitable access to health-care services for all residents. On Election Day, candidates were out in full force at polling stations in a last-minute bid to convince voters to support them. Voting booths were without curtains for the first time to stem voter fraud. With a total of 14,678 persons casting their votes, the 2024 voter turnout was the highest in eight years.

-- On Saturday, January 13, the United Resilient St. Maarten Movement (URSM), Democratic Party (DP), Party for Progress (PFP), and Nation Opportunity Wealth (NOW)—each having obtained two seats in Parliament—signed a coalition agreement to form a new government for the 2024-2028 governing period. The parties agreed that the new Prime Minister would come from the URSM party.

-- Caretaker State Secretary of Kingdom Relations Alexandra van Huffelen congratulated all winning parties in St. Maarten's elections during the first online Kingdom Council of Ministers press briefing of the year on January 22. In this meeting, Van Huffelen stated that she had received the outline agreement for the ENNIA resolution and announced that the Netherlands would make a final assessment.

-- While several political parties listed pursuing United States preclearance for St. Maarten as objectives in their manifestos, preclearance remains off the table for St. Maarten. US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) has not changed its posture

regarding preclearance expansion, the US Mission to the Dutch Caribbean informed.

-- More than a year and a half after the Ombudsman of St. Maarten highlighted in its conclusive report on the tendering for solid waste collection contracts that the information-gathering process was hindered by Minister of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) Egbert Doran, the previously elusive evaluation sheets surfaced. These documents reveal a peculiar situation involving two sets of evaluations.

-- The Joint Court of Justice handed down a tougher sentence for Frans Richardson (55) on January 24. The punishment that the lower court imposed on the former Member of Parliament after finding him guilty of bribery and abuse of position was increased from one year in prison to one year and seven months' jail time. The court confirmed a 193,000 Naf dispossession claim.



Judge Jacob "Bob" Wit, President of St. Maarten's Constitutional Court, passed away on January 16. He was 71 years old. "We have lost a great legal mind," said Maurits de Kort, President of the Joint Court of Justice. "He excelled in finding non-traditional solutions to complex problems and really supported, through the judiciary, the development of our democratic institutions."



A week after the January 11 parliamentary elections, the board of the United People's (UP) party announced that Rolando Brison (left) had stepped down as leader of the UP. He was succeeded by Omar Ottley, acting Minister of VSA, who had secured significantly more votes during the elections than Brison.



## PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION 2024



Preliminary results of the January 11 Parliamentary elections were released at the end of the night of the election, with official results announced by the Central Voting Bureau on 18 January. Two of the eight parties did not get enough votes for a seat in Parliament: the one-man ECE party of Nigel Wigley (colour purple) received 291 votes, while the United St. Maarten Party (colour blue), led by Pamela Gordon-Carty, received 689 votes.

-- The TelEm Group of Companies announced to its employees that it would be making "a significant reduction" in its workforce effective April 1. Some 58% of the staffers, or 52 full-time employees, were expected to be part of the workforce reduction. TelEm addressed

the severe financial challenges of the company in a press statement.

-- The Committee for Financial Supervision (CFT) voiced discontent over the "structurally late" national budget. In an urgent letter to the Parliament of St.

Maarten, CFT urged St. Maarten to solve this problem and submit the 2024 budget as soon as possible. The budget was already five weeks overdue, as CFT is to receive the budget for review before 15 December each year.



The TelEm Group of Companies announced to its employees that it would be making "a significant reduction" in its workforce effective April 1.



Theo Heyliger (53) complied with his summons and walked into the Pointe Blanche prison around 10:00 am on Monday, January 15, to begin serving a five-year sentence for accepting bribes and money laundering. Heyliger's wife, MP-elect Grisha Heyliger-Marten, revealed that the summons had arrived four hours after the results of St. Maarten's 2024 elections were announced. Pictured is Heyliger, accompanied by his wife, going to trial in 2020. The hearings in the Larimar case took place at the Belair Community Centre.



## FEBRUARY

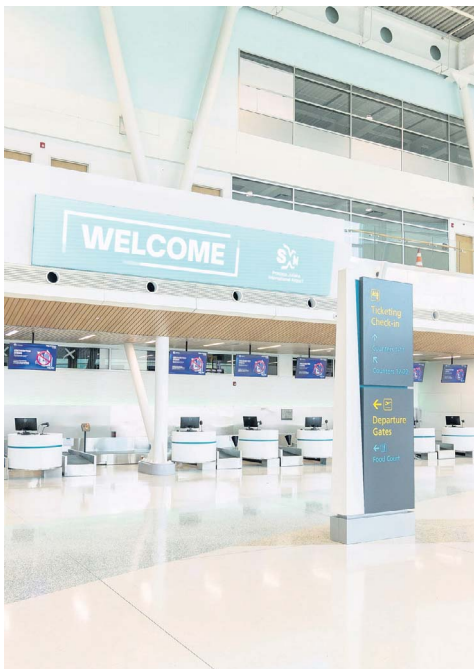
February saw intense scrutiny by the Committee for Financial Supervision, which suggested St. Maarten focus on primary/preventive rather than secondary healthcare, considering its NAf. 274 million deficit in health-care funds as of 2022. It warned that 2029 could see insufficient premiums to pay pensions to the increasing number of elderly persons and urged prompt adoption of the 2024 budget, which has never happened since 10-10-10. The sixth Parliament of St. Maarten was sworn in, unaware that it would serve for just months before the government would fall. Black History Month was celebrated with tributes to local writers by St. Maarten Library, showing of "A Jazz Triple Bill"



A weather system caused flooding on Zagersgut Road, Bush Road/Cost-U-Less, and Wellington Road, necessitating a Flood Watch, a small craft advisory, and school closures.



Motorists picked up their 2024 motor vehicle QR code stickers at the Receiver's Office – a first for St. Maarten, which had been issuing new number plates yearly until then.



Princess Juliana International Airport held a grand opening for its check-in hall, boasting 22 brand-new check-in counters and 28 state-of-the-art self-service check-in kiosks.



World Bank representatives congratulated the 14 civil society organisations (CSOs) awarded grants totalling US \$292,900 by Resources for Community Resilience (RC4R), in its seventh round of grants for community and social rehabilitation initiatives and improving CSO capacity for reconstruction and resilience activities post-Hurricane Irma.

by the National Institute of Arts, and an event themed "Black Empowerment Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow – Educate, Celebrate, Elevate" by Asha Stevens Hillside Christian School.

-- The Department of Statistics announced a 56% increase in cruise ship passengers from 2022 to 2023 and 6% more stay-over arrivals – welcome news and a testament to the country's resilience and recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement leader and Prime Minister candidate Dr. Luc Marcelina was appointed "formateur" to form the new incoming government for St. Maarten.

-- Guavaberry Road in St. Peters and Cassava Road in South Reward were paved to improve access and alleviate flood risk as part of the Side Roads Project.

-- For Heart Health Awareness Month, Collective Prevention Services launched its "Love Your Heart" campaign, and in collaboration with the Heart and Stroke Foundation, organised various activities and events throughout February.

-- Referring to St. Maarten legislation, the European Convention on Human Rights, and international human rights treaties, the Public Interest Litigation Project announced it was assisting St. Maarten residents in a lawsuit against the government of St. Maarten over a 2023 ban on demonstrating for a ceasefire in Gaza.

-- The inaugural visit to St. Maarten of the world's largest cruise ship, Royal Caribbean International's "Icon of the Seas", was heralded with a grand fireworks display. Members of the Council of Ministers, Parliament, and other stakeholders from both sides of the island were given a tour of the 1,198-foot-long ship.

-- Members of the Dutch First Chamber of Parliament, Committee for Kingdom Relations, paid a



Renowned local photographer and graphic designer Mark Martelly offered a stunning visual journey through his exhibition "Captured Moments", held at Axum Art Café. "I try to bring out the normal in an extraordinary way," he stated.



Former National Alliance leader and Member of Parliament William Marlin (right) drew the curtains on his 37-year-long political career with a historic speech at the closing of the 2020-2024 parliamentary term. His parting advice: "Politics is a team sport, and to win in this game, you have to be a team player."

courtesy call on the Council of Ministers, then met separately with the governor and Members of Parliament. The situation on St. Maarten since Hurricane Irma in 2017 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, along with other challenges, were discussed alongside financial support from the Netherlands.

-- SHOWME Caribbean launched a pan-tilt-zoom webcam on Maho Beach to highlight the breathtaking landscapes and vibrant activities that characterise this iconic location.

-- The "National Gazette" revealed that three money transfer companies in St. Maarten were put under the supervision of the Central Bank of Curaçao and St. Maarten since December 31, 2023: C-Post International NV (Money Gram); Union Caribe NV (Money Gram) St. Maarten Branch; and Western Union Direct BV (St. Maarten sub-agent).

-- The St. Maarten Tax Administration launched its new website, "tax.sx", with information on the Tax Administration's structure, relevant laws, and down-

loadable forms, such as Tax Return Forms, Profit Tax Returns, and Pension Request Forms, as well as a Frequently Asked Questions section.

-- The Audit Chamber recommended that ministers, Members of Parliament, and other government entities return the unused portion of the per diem they receive, as this is public money. It added that it wanted to see country St. Maarten financially stable and accountable so it could "get rid of" the Committee for Financial Supervision.



## MARCH

March saw joyful pre-Carnival events alongside a successful SXM Lagoon Festival and an incident-free Heineken Regatta 2024, thanks to the collaborative efforts of its organisers, the St. Maarten Police Force, the Volunteer Corps, and the French Gendarmerie. Multiple anniversaries were celebrated: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry at 45 years, Rotary Club of St. Maarten 52, SXM DOET 10, and the National Institute of Arts Youth Orchestra five. International Women's Day and Women's Her Story Month brought celebrations of local women's achievements and opportunities for their further growth, including "The Rising Women in Maritime" and Republic Bank (EC) Limited's Entrepreneurs Business Builder Programme to help women attain skills required to develop tech-enabled, sustainable, profitable enterprises.

-- St. Maarten Police Force sent six female officers to the Gender-Responsive Po-

licing Conference themed "Empowered Women Empower Women," hosted by the International Association of Women Police, Caribbean Region 26, in the Cayman Islands.

-- Sol Ecolution signed its first renewable energy agreement in St. Maarten with the National Institute for Professional Advancement. The solar project is expected to offset annual greenhouse gas emissions by around 58.5 metric tons of carbon dioxide, equivalent to 5,740 gallons of diesel, for savings of US \$207,000 in electricity bills over the next 25 years.

-- The first-ever Moët & Chandon vending machine in the Caribbean, dispensing mini bottles of the iconic champagne, was rolled out at the Caribbean Liquors Duty-Free outlet of the Princess Juliana International Airport departure hall.

-- Hosted by Dr. Simply Ann and the Uplifting Moms Association, the Women of Excellence Award Ceremony



The Taino conch player Miguel, a real cast of the "conch man" (left), was one of several overland sculptures featuring locals introduced by Under SXM, the company that opened the underwater sculpture park in January. Others included Taino warrior Lewis; Ponum dancer Evita; Carnival twerker Blondie; and calypso singer and icon King Beau Beau.



Thousands of spectators lined the streets to watch bands and revellers for the first official event of the 2024 Carnival season, the Causeway Jump-Up. The event saw Skillful Band leading the route, followed by Strictly Vybzy and TG Band with Mr. O-Ezy.



History was made as Governor Ajamu Baly swore in Florence Marlin (right) as the first official Secretary General of the Ministry of Justice. Then-Caretaker Minister of Justice Anna Richardson (left) said, "With this, we close a chapter of uncertainty and usher in a new era of sustainability within the Ministry of Justice."

recognised and celebrated the achievements of women while highlighting work still needed to achieve gender equality and inclusivity in society.

-- TelCell and TelNet services were interrupted island-wide for over eight hours due to the failure of the main uninterrupted power supply (UPS) system, coinciding with a GEBE power failure. A faulty generator part caused the system to fail again five days later.

-- Prime Minister Silveria Jacobs told Parliament that "NV GEBE needs to invest in new generators as soon as possible to support the N-2 concept and ensure a consistent supply of electricity to the entire island," N-2 referring to redundant power generation to meet demand even when two generators are not operational.

-- St. Maarten Development Fund's Plastic-Free SXM held a town hall on proposals to minimise the use of single-use plastics and poly-

styrene foam items on the island and associated timelines for phasing them out.

-- In honour of Nature Foundation's Biodiversity Awareness Month, Parliament ditched single-use plastics for an entire day and urged the public to follow suit.

-- The University of St. Martin announced its new Associate of Science in Information Technology Network programme, designed to provide a solid foundation in modern tech-

nological devices, network infrastructure, and artificial intelligence-powered applications.

-- Emilia Connor-Thomas was officially sworn in as Secretary General of the Ministry of General Affairs during a ceremony held at the Cabinet of Governor Ajamu Baly, having served as Acting Secretary General since January 2023, with what the Ministry called "remarkable dedication and capability."



The St. Maarten Trust Fund showcased its achievements since its inception in April 2018, during the first-ever "Results Fair and Panel Discussion." Following the devastating impacts of Hurricanes Irma and Maria in September 2017, the Trust Fund's mission of recovery and resilience was financed by the Netherlands at roughly US \$519 million, managed by the World Bank.



St. Maarten Outstanding Youth Awards were bestowed on 21 outstanding individuals by the St. Maarten Youth Council Association, recognising exceptional talent and contributions to Academics; Sports; Personal Improvement; Environment; Community; Science and Technological Services; Culture; and Music.



International Women's Day saw the Peridot Foundation honouring Susanna Velasquez (left) and Eileen Healy (right) – Velasquez for her transformative work in the casino industry for 37 years, with K1 Britannia Foundation and environmental initiatives, and Healy for her decades of dedication to mental healthcare.



## APRIL

April saw another successful Carnival, despite controversy over competing events outside the Village, cancelled events, and less calypsonian participation. Progress in forming a new government (which eventually served two weeks before falling) was stymied when the governor questioned the credentials of two of nine candidate ministers. GEBE's turbo-charger and "unforeseen

technical" issues caused frequent, long-lasting power outages. Meanwhile, St. Maarten Vocational Training School and Leonald Conner Primary School joined over 20 campuses already engaged with Green Dream Projects in promoting sustainable waste management.

-- A 4.5% minimum wage hike for full-time employees took effect on April 1, bring-

ing it to Naf. 1,800 (US \$1,000) per month or Naf. 10.40 per hour.

-- Strategically aligned with Sexual Assault Awareness Day, Victim Support Services officially opened on A. Th. Illidge Road to aid victims of crime and trauma, as well as their families affected by abuse, altercations, serious traffic accidents, or robbery.

-- To ensure compliance with relevant regulations and standards, a new Policy on Establishment of Healthcare Services required medical professionals seeking to practise locally to obtain a permit from the Ministry of Health and take an oath in front of the governor.

-- St. Maarten Shipping & Stevedoring NV announced the certification of 20 stevedores who completed the "Total Port Worker" training to enhance performance, adhere to international standards, and foster employee development across maritime transportation, warehousing, and distribution sectors.

-- MCB Group, which includes Windward Islands



Dr. Marlon Buncamper (centre) and Dr. Marleen Meesters (right) performed the first-ever deep inferior epigastric perforator (DIEP) flap breast surgery at St. Maarten Medical Centre to restore the breast shape of a patient who had undergone a mastectomy as breast cancer treatment. The patient made a full recovery.



The road was blocked in both directions when a septic truck en route to the wastewater facility on A.Th. Illidge Road overturned while descending Mount Willem Hill. There were no serious injuries, although the truck fell onto a car in the process.



A stop order based on the Monument Ordinance interrupted groundwork without a permit near Atrium Beach Resort in Simpson Bay, amid concerns about its impact on the old Simpson Bay Bridge, designated a national monument.



Governor Ajamu Baly (centre) delivered Royal Decorations for outstanding service to: Sports Editor at 'The Daily Herald' Coach Tom Burnett (centre, right) for youth welfare; Claudette Labega-Forsythe (centre left) for education, youth welfare, and culture (Knights in the Order of Oranje-Nassau); M.N. Arrindell-Simpson (second left) for elderly welfare and reading promotion; Bregje van't Hof-Boetekees (right) for health care; Pamela Simms (third left) for animal welfare; Garth Steyn (left) for shipping and youth welfare; Mercedes van der Waals-Wyatt (third right) for preventive healthcare; and Louis Wever (second right) for charities, care, and health (Members of the Order of Oranje-Nassau).



Nature Foundation St. Maarten, Sol Antilles NV, and the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard collaborated with NV GEBE to quickly contain an oil spill from GEBE's power plant in Cole Bay that stretched several hundred metres, caused by "an overflowing settling tank within the fuel farm."



Some of the concrete benches lining Front Street were in a deplorable condition, tarnishing the town's appearance. They were eventually repaired.

Bank, launched the \*Sentoo.me\* app for personal payment requests, building on their existing service for businesses. Orco Bank also partnered with Sentoo, an innovative domestic instant payment method allowing customers to make online payments directly from their bank accounts through webshop purchases, payment links, or QR codes.

-- No bids were received during the public auction of Carbon Grove Estate, the unfinished gated community on Cole Bay Hill that boasted 92 homes, 64 condominiums, and 28 townhouses but had only 55 units, with 23 non-existent pre-sold units. In what the court termed a Ponzi scheme, its owner fled the island after 40 defrauded clients filed complaints.

-- The University of St. Martin (USM) suggested to Parliament its official designation with full legal capacity as the island's main institution for higher education

and scientific research, funded at a minimum of 80% by the country.

-- Party for Progress called

for a dedicated national ordinance for the screening of candidate ministers to replace the loosely used "norms" that were never communicated to the public.

-- With a preliminary surplus of Naf. 16 million on its 2023 operational budget, St. Maarten was deemed by the Committee for Financial Supervision to have met the central budgetary standard set out in the Kingdom Act on Financial Supervision Curaçao and St. Maarten (RFT). However, it lacked adequate analysis of the differences between the budget and its realisation.

-- The University of St. Martin partnered with Cuba's second-largest university, Universidad de Oriente in Santiago de Cuba, to support joint programmes, training, and student exchange experiences.

-- Social and Health Insurances revealed it would now cover services from the Diabetic Foot Care St. Maarten Foundation (D-FOOT).



## MAY

*Politics played a major role in the news in May with the fall of the new URSM/PEP/DP/NOW government just over two weeks after taking office, triggering the dissolution of Parliament and the calling of snap elections.*

-- The month began smoothly with the appointment and swearing-in of members of the new Council of Ministers as well as the Minister and Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary by Governor Aجامu Baly, 113 days—or three months and 23 days—after the January 11, 2024, election. Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina noted that this was just 17 days longer than it took the previous govern-

ment to form.

-- However, just 17 days later, many were shocked when the "two-by-four" coalition government lost its slim majority in Parliament. A new majority comprising the National Alliance (NA), United People's Party (UP), and Nation Opportunity Wealth (NOW) MP Kevin Maingrette signed a new coalition agreement after Maingrette withdrew his support from the coalition. This prompted the Mercelina Cabinet to invoke Article 59 of the constitution to dissolve the Parliament of St. Maarten and call snap elections, expected to cost the country approximately Naf. 500,000.



Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina (right), addressing members of the media (left), while members of the Council of Ministers look on.

-- The leadership of Parliament subsequently tendered its resignation to allow the new coalition to elect a new President of Parliament. Resigning were President of Parliament Sarah Wescot-Williams, Vice President Christophe Emmanuel, and Second Vice President Melissa Gumbs. The fall of the government was short-lived as Maingrette withdrew his support from the new coalition; however, the invoking of Article 59 could not be reversed, and elections had to proceed.

-- The Central Voting Bureau later called for the postponement of the snap elections from July 18 to August 19 to uphold the principles of fair, transparent, and credible elections.

-- More drama unfolded when it was time to admit new MPs Richinel Brug (URSM) and Viren Vinod Kotai (DP) to Parliament. After three unsuccessful attempts to examine their credentials and admit the MPs, they were finally admitted on the fourth attempt. The first attempt on Thursday, May 2, and the second attempt on Monday, May 6, failed due to a lack of quorum. The third attempt on the same day also



The Ministry of VROMI marked the spot of the sinkhole discovered on the A.J.C. Brouwer Road.

failed when NA and UP MPs walked out after a proposal by NA MP Egbert Doran to adjust the agenda—to include two points about dissolving and appointing a new presidium—was denied.

-- In a first, the new Council of Ministers (CoM) met with representatives of the press to discuss changes to the format of the Council of Ministers Press Briefing and the media policy enacted by the previous government.

-- On the cultural front, the St. Maarten Carnival Development Foundation (SCDF) concluded the 53rd edition of Carnival in May. Despite facing various obstacles, SCDF President Eduardo Radjouki expressed gratitude for reaching the finish line, saying, "This can never happen again. This is not who we are."

-- Rodents caused issues for the utilities company GEBE in May, leading to a series of technical difficulties. A short-circuit explosion occurred at one of its transformer stations due to what GEBE said was a rodent infestation spurred by illegal dumping around the station.

-- The Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) issued a traffic alert concerning the A.J.C. Brouwer Road, specif-



King Momo was burnt at the Jocelyn Arndell Festival Village on May 7 to wrap up Carnival 2024.

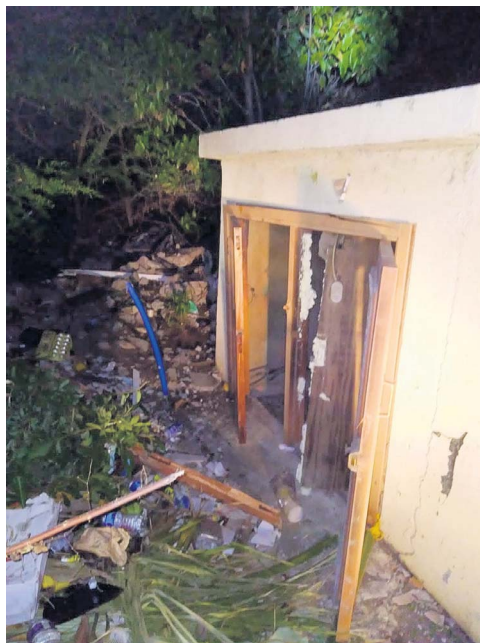


Governor Aجامu Baly with members of the new Council of Ministers and the Minister and Deputy Minister Plenipotentiary after being sworn in on May 5.

ically Cole Bay Hill, where a sinkhole emerged, compromising the asphalt surface, and presenting a safety risk. The sinkhole was repaired months later.

-- A young trailblazer, St. Dominic Primary sixth-grader Benae Dawkins Fitzpatrick, won the fiercely

contested third Annual Interscholastic Spoken Word Competition. He delivered two powerful and touching spoken word pieces on bullying and suicide awareness. Fitzpatrick has also won several other competitions, including spelling bees, over the years.



GEBE's transformer station, littered with garbage on the outside, was infested with rats.



Interscholastic Spoken Word Competition winner Benae Fitzpatrick collecting one of his prizes with some of his supporting actors, team members, and Men's Mental Health Awareness Foundation President Ahmad "Ahmiie" Gumbs.



## JUNE

*The energy crisis that gripped the country earlier this year, along with preparations for the August snap elections, topped headlines in June. Several outages plagued the country, including a total blackout lasting over six hours on June 1, heightening residents' frustration.*

-- The month began with the total blackout that plunged the country into darkness, in some cases for over six and a half hours. Residents, already exasperated by frequent load shedding, were further frustrated by the total blackout. This occurred hours after a fire at the Power Plant and was accompanied by an internet outage. Many businesses were affected, including The Daily Herald, which was unable to publish the newspaper the

following day. Shoppers in some supermarkets navigated aisles in darkness.

-- GEBE announced days later, during Part I of its "Candid Conversations" public information series, that it was looking to rent a power barge or containerised energy as a short-term solution to provide an additional 20 MW of electricity. This would address the 10 MW shortage and provide excess capacity. The company also stated its electricity rates were the "17th cheapest" of 20 Caribbean islands.

-- On June 12, the Prime Minister revealed that preliminary expenses to rent containers would be approximately US \$500,000 per month. For a lease-to-own concept, payments of US \$200,000 per month would be required over a 36-month period. Additionally, the

crankshaft of GEBE generator Unit 19, which has exceeded its 30-year lifespan, is broken, and will cost \$2.5 million to replace. He later announced that authorities were no longer considering renting a power barge due to costs ranging from US \$3.9 million to \$8.2 million per month. Instead, GEBE would rent containerised energy.

-- On Sunday, June 16, the GEBE board gave temporary manager Troy Washington authority to finalise discussions with potential suppliers and sign the deal on behalf of the company. The decision was made to rent 10 MW container generators and lease-to-own 20 MW container generators for US \$7.7 million. In the interim, six large properties, including five major hotels, agreed to disconnect from the electricity grid at intervals to free up 4 MW of electricity, alleviating load shedding. Additionally, Generator 8, damaged in the recent fire, would soon be operational, adding 3 MW to the system. Combined, the measures would provide an additional 17 MW of energy.

-- Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport and Telecommunication (TEATT), Grisha Heyliger-Marten, welcomed Frontier Airlines' maiden flight 244 from San Juan, Puerto Rico, to Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) in early June.

-- On the elections front, the Electoral Council announced it had received two applications for the registration of new political parties for the August snap elections. The applications were from the Soualiga Action Movement (SAM) and the Oualichi Movement for Change (OMC). Two parties, the United Democrats (UD) and Concordia Political Alliance (CPA), withdrew their registration.

Contesting the elections were: SAM, OMC, United People's Party Association (UP), National Alliance (NA), Party for Progress (PFP), Association Nation Opportunity Wealth (NOW), Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement Association (URSM), Democratic Party of St. Maarten (DP), and Empire Culture Empowerment Association (ECE).

-- On the business front, LF Group of Properties Ltd confirmed its purchase of the Pasanggrahan Royal Guest House on Front Street, Philipsburg, at an auction on June 6. Retail tenants were informed of



A section of the 400-plus Guardian Group Walk and Run participants in June.



From left: Minister of Finance Marinka Gumbs, Winair's CFO Roberto Gibbs, Winair SBOD member Joane Dovele-Meit, Prime Minister Luc Mercelina, Winair's CEO Hans van de Velde, Minister of Public Health, Social Development and Labour Veronica Jansen-Webster, Winair SBOD member Jimmy Challenger, Minister of TEATT Grisha Heyliger-Marten.



USM graduates at its 30th commencement ceremony on June 22.

the acquisition but were not required to vacate.

-- Good news surfaced on June 19, when Winair announced a significant milestone: shareholder approval for the acquisition of a DHC-300 aircraft. This transition from a fully leased fleet to ownership of a Twin Otter DHC6 aircraft marked a strategic move towards greater operational control and efficiency, dem-

onstrating the company's commitment to exceptional service in the Caribbean.

-- Julia Brown, Managing Director of Rapid Caribe Links and former TV Caribbean reporter, anchor, and producer, announced in June her appointment as the first Honorary Consul for Jamaica in St. Maarten. Brown's responsibilities include processing consular documents such as emer-

gency travel documents and visas, certifying and transmitting passport applications, and authenticating and legalising documents.

-- The University of St. Martin (USM) hosted its 30th Commencement Exercise on Saturday, June 22, at the Simpson Bay Resort Ballroom. This significant milestone coincided with the university's 35th anniversary celebrations.



PJIA CEO Brian Mingo and TEATT Minister Grisha Heyliger-Marten welcomed Frontier Airlines to the country in June.



The newly appointed Honorary Consul for Jamaica in St. Maarten, Julia Brown.



## JULY

*The tragic killing of the wife of Oualichi Movement for Change (OMC) leader Olivier Arrindell, Sabine, and elections dominated headlines in June as politicians and political parties prepared for the snap Parliamentary elections held in August.*

-- The month began with various political parties submitting their candidate lists to contest the elections. Submitting lists were URSM, ECE, SAM, OMC, PFP, DP, NA, UP, and NOW.

-- On Endorsement Day, Oualichi Movement for Change (OMC) and Souliga Action Movement (SAM) secured sufficient signatures to contest the election. Each party had

to obtain a total of 144 signatures from eligible voters, and both parties surpassed this amount. ECE did not meet the required number of signatures on the first day. However, one day later, ECE qualified with 222 endorsements.

-- On July 15, the Central Voting Bureau unanimously approved the validity of the lists of candidates from the nine political parties contesting the election during a public session at the House of Parliament. The maintenance of the candidates on each list, as well as the designations above each list for all political parties, were also approved.

-- The potential introduction of a City Manager to develop strategies aimed at attracting not only residents and cruise visitors to Philipsburg but also stop-over or stay-over

guests was among the strategies proposed to improve the tourism product. This was discussed by Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Transport, and Telecommunication (TEATT), Grisha Heyliger-Marten, with a delegation from the Indian Merchants Association (IMA).

-- Air Canada announced a new Montreal–St Maarten flight and the doubling of its existing twice-weekly Toronto Pearson (YYZ) service, starting November 17, 2024. Flight AC 1362 will depart Montreal (YUL) for St Maarten at 10:15 a.m. and arrive at 3:55 p.m., while the return flight AC 1363 will depart St Maarten at 4:55 p.m. and arrive in Montreal at 8:55 p.m. This new service will use the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft with a seating capacity of 169, including 16 business-class seats.

-- Utilities company NV GEBE made the "initial down payment" for the rental of 10 MW container generators, which were expected to be delivered to the country by mid-July, barring unforeseen delays.

-- An end to the widespread load-shedding across the country came closer to reality with the arrival of seven containerised 10 MW engines in mid-July. Installation of the engines began immediately. GEBE stated that the arrival of the engines was a crucial part of its immediate plan to address the recent energy shortages, which had caused load-shedding affecting customers since the end of May.

-- VROMI Minister Patrice Gumbs signed a Naf. 5.6 million road resurfacing agreement with Windward Roads while demanding new quality standards. The accord paved the way for road repairs and upgrades. Since taking office, Minister Gumbs has focused on rebuilding trust within the Ministry of VROMI and



Representatives of the nine political parties participated in the Central Voting Bureau meeting on July 18 to select numbering on the ballot and colour for the list.



A screenshot taken from a live video by local journalist Andrew Dick, showing the car in which Olivier Arrindell's partner Sabine reportedly died.

with the public.

-- The Criminal Investigation Team (RST), under the direction of the examining judge, conducted searches at the home and workplace of then-Independent Member of Parliament (MP) Kevin Maingrette at the Parliament Building. The Prosecutor's Office (OM) said in a press release that the searches were part of the criminal investigation "Metz." The MP is suspected of taking bribes and misusing his position. The investigation focuses on the events leading to the collapse of the recently formed government.

-- On July 17, controversial politician and OMC leader Olivier Arrindell and his party candidate Laurence Lake were shot in the Maho area. Arrindell's partner Sabine was killed in the hail of bullets fired at their car.

-- A day later, Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina said there was no indication at the time that the act of violence against the OMC leader, his family, and a candidate had been politically motivated. Arrindell later claimed in an interview with \*The Daily Herald\* that the attack had been a planned political assassination. Police subsequently detained a person of interest in connection with the shooting.

-- In a drastic move to promote the safety and security of the population, the Council of Ministers decided to cancel all public political meetings requiring permits as of Wednesday, July 24.



SAM leader Franklin Meyers and some candidates at the Government Building during Endorsement Day in July.



VROMI Minister Patrice Gumbs (third left), Cabinet advisor Luciano Nicholls (right), and representatives of construction company Windward Roads at the signing of a Naf. 5.6 million road resurfacing project.

They also banned gatherings near polling stations on election day and maintained the prohibition of alcohol sales on that day. The decision met with sharp criticism. Justice Minister Lyndon Lewis later stated that no ban on public meetings had been in place.

-- While out on bail in Trinidad, 28-year-old dancehall artiste Meschach "Plumpy Boss" Emmanuel of Port of Spain was targeted in a



The van used by the victims was towed by police for investigation.



One of the containerised generators being offloaded after arriving in St Maarten in July.



Members of the Central Voting Bureau voted unanimously for all parties to proceed to the ballot for the elections on July 15.

drive-by shooting in Maho Village on July 28. Plumpy Boss and his entourage, returning from a performance at Moon Bar, were met by a hail of bullets. The artiste, along with three men and a woman, was injured. Plumpy Boss was placed in a coma following the shooting and, after pleas from his mother in Trinidad, was flown to his home country for further medical aid.



## AUGUST

*The spate of crime and unrest in Dutch Quarter, coupled with elections, were among the issues that made headlines in August, with citizens going to the polls to elect 15 Members of Parliament in a snap election on August 19.*

-- After an uneventful election day, Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement

(URSM) and the Democratic Party (DP) increased their seat total from two to three. The National Alliance (NA) dropped from four to three seats; United People's (UP) Party dropped from three to two seats; new party Soualiga Action Movement (SAM) obtained one seat; Nation Opportunity Wealth (NOW) dropped from two seats to one seat, and Party

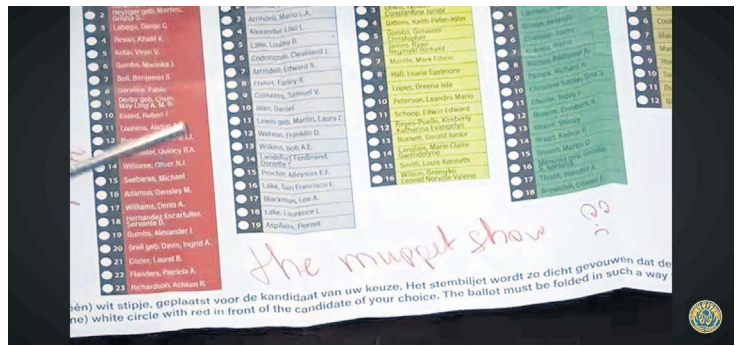
for Progress (PFP) attained two seats. The snap election's biggest vote-getter was then caretaker Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina, who received a massive 1,315 personal votes.

-- A few days after the election, URSM, DP, PFP, and SAM signed a declaration of intent to form the next governing coalition for the country, backed by nine seats in Parliament—one seat more than the last coalition. The media was invited to cover the event and was able to ask questions of the signatories, which is rare for coalition agreements in recent years.

-- The outcome of the elections brought into question the leadership of the NA, whose leader Silveria Jacobs received fewer votes than number two candidate Egbert Doran, who received 361 votes (a big drop from the 583 he received in January and the 865 he got in the 2020 elections), while Jacobs received 283 votes (much less than the 467 she received in January and the 752 received in the 2020 elections). Jacobs later announced that she was bowing out of active politics "for now" and had resigned as NA leader, stating that it would be "unjust to maintain leadership considering the lack of support from the electorate." Her resignation took effect on September 19, the end date of her tenure as an elected MP over the last 10 years.

-- On August 29, the Central Voting Bureau (CVB) established the official results of the election after three days of counting votes from all 20 voting districts and all invalid votes. While some MPs gained votes, the official results showed that there were no changes in the distribution of seats or in the 15 Members of Parliament (MPs)-elect, as announced during the preliminary results. The Bureau had originally intended to count seven districts and all invalid votes and subsequently decided to do a full recount of District 5 after encountering a dummy ballot in the pile of invalid votes and noting a discrepancy. The Bureau then decided to recount all districts.

-- Dutch Quarter residents were caught off guard in August when unexpected unrest occurred in the neighbourhood, resulting in the damaging of multiple properties and vehicles, including an unmarked police car being set on fire and public disorder. Two law enforcement personnel, including Marines, sustained injuries during the unrest. Eighteen



One voter took the time to write "the Muppet show" on their ballot while voting for all party leaders, rendering the vote invalid.



Several vehicles, including an unmarked police car, were set on fire by rioters in Dutch Quarter.



Signing of a declaration of intent among the parties that intend to form the next government for St. Maarten. From left are PFP leader Melissa Gumbs, DP leader Sarah Wescot-Williams, URSM leader Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina, and SAM leader MP-elect Franklin Meyers.



From left: Manager Patient Care Nurse Antonio Pantophlet, OBGYN/Pediatrics Supervisor Nurse Sherryl Carty-Fleming, and SMMC CEO Dr. Felix Holiday cutting the symbolic ribbon to officially open the hospital's Breastfeeding Lounge.



Governor Ajamu Baly (foreground, centre) cast his ballot at the St. Maarten Senior Citizen Recreational Centre. Photo by Dimetri Whitfield.



URSM candidates celebrating at the party's headquarters when it became clear that the party was headed for three seats and that its leader was leading the polls as the biggest vote-getter. August 4, 2024.

suspects were apprehended on charges of property destruction, public disorder, and attempted theft.

-- The unrest resulted in police being granted "stop and search powers" under the firearms ordinance, which was extended several times.

-- UP MP Akeem Arrindell was arrested and released the following day as part of an ongoing investigation into suspected vote-buying during the January 11 Parliamentary elections. His arrest sparked the UP party to condemn the arrest and indicate in a statement that it stood resolute in its support of MP Arrindell.

-- St. Maarten Medical Center (SMMC) opened the island's first breastfeeding lounge, located on the Pediatric In-Patient Ward of the hospital. The lounge,

championed by SMMC's Breastfeeding Committee, symbolises the organisation's stance as a "Breast is Best" hospital and one that supports working mothers. The lounge is open 24/7.

-- Finance Minister Marinka Gumbs announced that APS' pension will be indexed by 2.1% retroactively to January 1. The adjustment is a result of APS' coverage ratio of 109% at the end of 2023.

-- The electricity crisis at utilities company GEBE worsened in August when four engines went down, further reducing the company's ability to supply electricity to the community and leading to more load shedding, angering and frustrating residents.

-- The island had a close call with nature in August,

with the passing of Tropical Storm Ernesto. In the end, the storm caused only minor damage, including minor damage to buildings in Belvedere, Maho, tents at the Philipsburg Marketplace, and some tents outside the arrival hall at PJIA.

-- Inspired by the vibrant underwater world of St. Maarten and Curacao, the new look of the Caribbean Guilder was unveiled for the first time at a ceremony held at the Sonesta Maho Beach Resort and Casino in August. A similar ceremony was held in Curacao. The banknotes and coins draw inspiration from the world under the sea. The Central Bank for Curacao and St. Maarten (CBCS) said this serves as a metaphor for the unity shared between the countries of St. Maarten and Curacao in its monetary union.



## SEPTEMBER

*The ongoing energy crisis dominated the headlines in September, with Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina proposing that the seven containerised generators rented by the country for a three-month period be converted into a rent-to-own agreement. The generators, which were brand new, would provide a valuable buffer for the country's electricity supply, he said. The Prime Minister also emphasised that the utilities company GEBE would absorb fluctuations in fuel costs, ensuring that consumers would not bear the burden. He reassured the public that his government would keep its promises and work to regain the trust of the people. Meanwhile, newly appointed State Secretary for Kingdom Relations and Digitalisation Zsolt Szabo stressed the importance of making the economies of St. Maarten, Curacao, and Aruba self-reliant. However, as St. Maarten finalised its 2025 national budget, the country acknowledged it lacks the resources to address the energy crisis on its own. A plan tabled by*

*the former Silveria Jacobs-led administration to boost government coffers by selling part of the government's shares in Windward Islands Airways International (WINAIR) was unanimously rejected by the Mercelina cabinet, which would instead seek financial support from the Netherlands.*

-- The establishment of a sustainable solid waste management system, the restructuring and redesign of the tax system, and stimulating the agricultural sector are among the policies to be pursued by the government in the new term. Governor Ajamu Baly outlined the plans during his remarks at the opening ceremony of the 2024-2025 parliamentary year on September 10. Baly opened his remarks by saying that St. Maarten is at a critical turning point in its development.

-- Finance Minister Marinika Gumbs presented parliament with an addendum to the Ennia Outline Agreement and urged Members of Parliament to approve the amended agreement, which she said will save the country approximately 37

million guilders in comparison to the agreement inked by the former government. The addendum stated that St. Maarten will not be paying for Ennia policyholders in Bonaire, Saba, St. Eustatius, or Suriname.

-- Minister of Public Health, Social Planning, and Labour (VSA) Veronica Jansen-Webster introduced a plan for "Sustainable, Affordable, and Fair Access to Health and Wellness in St. Maarten." Seeing that healthcare expenses surpassed premium coverage by 31 million guilders in 2023, the Minister aimed to broaden the number of premium contributors and target overutilisation of healthcare services.

-- The Social-Economic Council (SER) of St. Maarten was fully reinstated after an 18-month hiatus. Governor Ajamu Baly approved the appointment to the SER of three independent members, three representatives of the employers' sector, and three representatives of the employees on the island.

-- The Council of Advice issued an unsolicited recommendation calling for a clear and comprehensive legal framework to guide the screening of ministerial candidates. This move is aimed at ensuring that the vetting process is conducted in a lawful, fair, and transparent manner, thereby reinforcing public confidence in the procedure.

-- Following Parliament's approval of the credentials of the fifteen Members of Parliament (MPs) who were elected during the August 19 snap parliamentary elections, the incoming MPs were sworn in by Governor Baly on September 20. The oath was taken by Democratic Party (DP) MPs Sarah Wescot-Williams, Grisha Heyliger-Martin, and Viren Kotai; Unified Resilient St. Maarten Movement (URSM) MPs Luc Mercelina, Sjamira Roseburg, and Richinel Brug;



The Emilio Wilson Estate Foundation and its sister organisation, the St. Maarten Pride Adventures, welcomed the news that the government is in discussions with Rainforest to return approximately half of the Emilio Wilson Estate to public ownership. The foundations are encouraged by the government's intention to designate parts of the estate for agriculture and conservation.



For the first time since 2020, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) welcomed a new Secretary-General. Kenson Plaisimond (38) assumed the position on Monday, September 2. A former student of St. Maarten Academy, Plaisimond holds a bachelor's degree in engineering and previously worked as a software engineer before taking on the highest position within VROMI.

National Alliance (NA) MPs Egbert Doran, Ardwell Iri- on, and Darryl York; Party for Progress (PFP) MPs Melissa Gumbs and Ludmila de Weever; United People's (UP) Party MPs Omar Ottley and Francisco Lac- roes; Nation, Opportunity and Wealth (NOW) MP Lyndon Lewis; and Soualiga Action Movement (SAM) MP Franklyn Meyers.

-- Departing Member of Parliament and former National Alliance (NA) leader Silveria Jacobs received praise and commendation as she bade farewell to the legislature and officially stepped down as the party leader. During the closing of the seven-month term of Parliament, new NA leader Egbert Doran presented Jacobs with flowers and expressed gratitude for her service.

SINT MAARTEN  
**DIAGNOSTIC CENTER**  
Family Medicine | Laboratory

NEW TO SINT MAARTEN!!

**URGENT CARE**

*Your Care. Our Concern.*



Social and Health Insurances (SZV) has decided to stop covering costs for patients visiting the Huisartsen Post (HAP), the country's only after-hours clinic. This decision led to the closure of HAP, aligning with VSA Minister Veronica Jansen-Webster's plan to address the "overuse of healthcare services." HAP was accused of "irregularities with billing," which allegedly contributed to high costs incurred by SZV.



The Court of First Instance has overturned a decision by the Minister of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) to deny a building permit for The Morgan Residences, a project designed by DAM Caribbean. The development, which includes 120 luxury condominiums and a 150-metre-long infinity pool, is set to be built next to the existing Morgan Resort as part of a broader masterplan for the area.



The long-awaited groundbreaking ceremony for the Soualiga Market for local vendors in the heart of Philipsburg was attended by Prime Minister Luc Mercelina, various government ministers and officials, as well as a group of enthusiastic vendors. During the event, TEATT Minister Grisha Heyliger-Martin emphasised that the reconstruction of the marketplace marks the beginning of the much-needed revitalisation of Philipsburg, with plans to enhance both the city's charm and safety.



## OCTOBER

**Breast Cancer Awareness Month** was celebrated in various ways, with the "Pink Sunset Sail" by Aqua Mania Adventures raising nearly US \$10,000 for the cause. Seniors were honoured on International Day of Older Persons, even while an elderly person became the victim of a scooter hit-and-run. Small property owners were recognised on World Tourism Day, and the Mental Health Foundation highlighted the link between mental health and the workplace for World Mental Health Day. Engine failures

continued at NV GEBE, even as it installed 20 one-megawatt generators to better meet demand. Several roads were repaved in time for St. Maarten to shine as host of the Florida-Caribbean Cruise Association Conference held at Sonesta Maho Beach Resort.

-- Members of the Dutch St. Maarten and Airport Taxi Associations took it upon themselves to clear overgrown trees from Bell's Lookout Point, revealing the beautiful view once

again.

-- State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitisation Zsolt Szabó made his first official trip to St. Maarten. Admitting to planned budget cuts for the Dutch Caribbean, he promised increased spending on agriculture, continued grants, and heavy investment in border security.

-- The financial supervision imposed on St. Maarten since 2010 was extended for the fourth time, until 2027, based on an evaluation committee's findings that the standards outlined in the Kingdom Act on Financial Supervision are not being met.



Owner and developer of Dock Maarten Marina, Michel Deher, passed away but not before seeing his marina reach its zenith: fully booked and with a cofferdam that can accommodate two superyachts, making it the largest private dock in the Caribbean. (Edward Penagos photo)



Princess Juliana International Airport hosted its inaugural "Princess Walk" in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Organised by the airport's operating company in collaboration with Elektraljets and Positive Foundations, the event raised awareness and funds for breast cancer prevention and care.



UN Resident Coordinator for St. Maarten, Aruba, Curaçao, and Trinidad and Tobago, Joanna Kazana, presented her credentials to Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina during her first official visit to the island. She met with the Council of Ministers, secretaries general, UN agencies, and civil society to explore how the UN can enhance support for St. Maarten's development.

-- Soualiga Action Movement Member of Parliament Franklin Meyers pointed out that existing cemeteries are 85–90% full, urging the government to "get ahead" of this looming concern.

-- Dutch nationals and naturalised citizens were frustrated to receive letters from the Census Office requesting legalised birth certificates not older than three years, within six months, to retrieve any product from the department. The Civil Registry stated its digital records were incomplete, interfering with its ability to issue official documents like death certificates.

-- The Justice Ministry established an Objection Committee to review objections filed concerning National Decrees issued to civil servants in the ministry, a long-standing matter of controversy.

-- St. Maarten Medical Centre revealed its new Holmium Quanta 150-watt laser, the most powerful Holmium laser for urology procedures, which will enhance its ability to perform minimally invasive urological procedures, offering patients improved outcomes and faster recovery times.

-- A Business Research and Economic Advisors report on direct cruise tourism expenditures in 2023–2024 showed 27% growth compared to their 2018 study. Of 33 destinations ranked, St. Maarten was number five, with US \$237.8 million, following The Bahamas (\$654.8 million), Cozumel, Mexico (\$483.1 million), the United States Virgin Islands (\$258.1 million), and the Dominican Republic (\$251.4 million).

-- More than 1,000 children, parents, and teachers attended the Reading Festival held at the University of St. Mar-

tin. Organised by Stichting Biblionef Netherlands in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, the St. Maarten Library, Help Our Children Foundation, and USM, it featured storytelling by local authors, interactive reading games, creative workshops, puppet shows, and the donation of over 2,600 books to children and schools.

-- Parliament approved a motion to zone Mullet Bay, designate Mullet Pond as a national monument, and create a unified beach ordinance.

-- Resources for Community Resilience (R4CR) launched the book "The 4-Year Journey of St. Maarten's Social Reconstruction" at its final conference, providing a comprehensive overview of projects implemented, non-profit organisations responsible, and contributing stakeholders.



Princess Juliana International Airport welcomed the inaugural flight of LIAT 2020 with dignitaries from Antigua, resuming direct weekly flights from Antigua. Owner LIAT 2020 succeeds LIAT 1974, which operated for 52 years. (Robert Luckock photo)



St. Maarten Academy Preparatory Secondary Vocational Education officially rebranded as St. Maarten Academy Vocational Business Campus, symbolising dedication to growth, ambition, and the fostering of dreams, the school said.



Officials from both sides of the island attended the inauguration of the new weather radar station in St. Peters. This state-of-the-art facility will enable meteorological services to issue more accurate alerts, safeguarding residents during natural disasters.



## NOVEMBER

*In preparation for St. Maarten's bustling tourist season, St. Maarten Police Force KPSM intensified its operations in Philipsburg, particularly during a week that saw seven cruise ships in port. Officers engaged with shop owners, offering security best practices to enhance safety in the area. However, the National General Police Union (NAPB) raised concerns about the dire state of the police vehicle fleet, emphasising*

*that the lack of reliable vehicles poses a direct threat to national security.*

Minister Lewis cancelled two scheduled Parliament meetings just weeks before the end of his term, leaving numerous questions, particularly from MP Sjamira Roseburg, unanswered. Formateur Luc Mercelina announced that the new Council of Ministers would be sworn in on November 26. Mercelina was set to return as Prime Minister, with most of his cabinet members continu-



"This is the time to roll up our sleeves and work together," said reappointed Tourism, Economic Affairs, Telecommunication, and Transport (TEATT) Minister Grisha Heyliger-Marten (left) and Finance Minister Marinka Gumbs (right). Both representing the Democratic Party, the newly sworn-in Ministers said on November 26 that they would work as a team in the interest of all people of St. Maarten.



In 1944, the late Princess Juliana inaugurated St. Maarten's airport, which proudly bears her name. Nearly 80 years later, on November 14, her daughter, Princess Beatrix—just six years old at the time of the original inauguration—followed in her mother's footsteps. The former Queen of the Netherlands unveiled a commemorative plaque to mark the grand reopening of Princess Juliana International Airport, honouring its legacy and significance to the island.



After years of dedicated effort to establish a permanent spiritual home for St. Maarten's Hindu community, President Mahendri Ramrattan of the St. Maarten Hindu Organisation announced the upcoming acquisition of land for a mandir. The announcement, made during the annual Diwali celebration at the Bel Air Community Centre, marks a significant milestone for the community. The new Hindu temple will be located across from Kooyman BV, providing a long-awaited space for worship and cultural activities.



Signs of the high season became evident as Port St. Maarten welcomed five cruise ships on November 26, marking the official start of the high tourist season. The following day, another five ships arrived, further increasing activity on the island. Residents experienced heavier traffic, particularly due to the influx of tour operators catering to the growing number of visitors.

ing in their ministerial roles. During the swearing-in ceremony, Governor Ajamu Baly urged the Mercelina II cabinet to prioritise the well-being of the nation. "The patient is in your care," Baly stated, calling on the Ministers to provide the attention and leadership that Country St. Maarten requires.

-- The Committee for Financial Supervision (CFT) informed the government that it is eligible to secure a loan for critical investments, including generators for utilities company GEBE and a new building for the Mental Health Foundation, among other initiatives. This decision followed the adoption of the amended 2024 national budget and the issuance of a corresponding positive advisory by the CFT.

-- November 14 marked a historic milestone for Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) with the grand reopening of its renovated terminal building. The occasion was celebrated with a festive and royal ceremony, graced by the presence of Princess Beatrix. PJIA



Rains ushered in St. Maarten Day with flooding and road hazards, as heavy downpours caused widespread street inundation, overflowing gutters, and rockfalls on roadways. Local nature conservationist Tadzio Bervoets emphasised that this weather event underscores the growing impact of climate change, noting that weather patterns are becoming increasingly unpredictable and challenging to forecast.

AE Chief Executive Officer Brian Mingo emphasised the significance of the terminal's reopening for the local economy. "Our airport stands as a vital gateway, connecting people and cultures across the Caribbean and beyond," he said.

-- As patroness of the Dutch Caribbean Nature Alliance, Princess Beatrix, during her visit to St. Maarten, dedicated a day to nature conservation. The former Queen of the Netherlands planted a native sea grape tree at Emilio Wilson Park, participated in a marine spatial planning lesson at Milton Peters College, and visited the Perpetual Plastics project.

-- After a week of rain showers and flooding, Minister of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment, and Infrastructure (VROMI) Patricia Gumbs highlighted the urgent need for infrastructure reform. He pointed out that the recent downpours

exposed critical weaknesses in the island's drainage systems. "Our infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth and urban expansion," Gumbs stated, underscoring the pressing need for improvements to better manage future weather challenges.

-- The construction of the Soualiga Market in Philipsburg has encountered another setback. Six years after Hurricane Irma partially destroyed the marketplace behind the Courthouse and led to the removal of vendor booths, hopes were revived with a highly anticipated groundbreaking ceremony in September. However, just two months later, vendors were informed that the project was halted due to unexpected soil quality issues encountered by the contractor, leaving the disillusioned vendors once again in uncertainty.

-- In a ruling on November

25, the court firmly upheld the fundamental rights to free speech and peaceful assembly. The case, brought by two private citizens, challenged the Minister of Justice to safeguard constitutional freedoms. The plaintiffs highlighted the essential right to hold public demonstrations for any cause, asserting the importance of protecting freedom of expression.

-- The resignation of Member of Parliament (MP) Richinel Brug (URSM) and re-elected MPs Dr. Luc Mercelina (URSM), Grisha Heyliger-Marten (DP), and Melissa Gumbs (PFP), effective November 26—the day they were sworn in as Ministers—created four vacancies in Parliament. These seats were subsequently filled by Veronica Jansen-Webster (URSM), Christophe Wever (URSM), Dimar Labega (DP), and Raeyhon Peterson (PFP).



## DECEMBER

Shortly after the start of the high tourist season on December 1, troubling news emerged from the maritime sector regarding an increase in thefts in the Simpson Bay Lagoon. St. Maarten Police Force KPSM issued a public warning, confirming that multiple reports had been received from boat owners and marinas about stolen dinghies and onboard burglaries. Newly appointed Minister of Justice, Nathalie Tackling, convened an emergency meeting with law enforcement agencies from both sides of the island, addressing the challenges of apprehending and prosecuting offenders of French nationality, as Dutch law enforcement is not permitted to pursue suspects in French waters. Following the meeting, the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard substation in St. Maarten and the French Gendarmerie initiated joint patrols in the lagoon. Victims of theft on either side of the lagoon were urged to report incidents to the authorities.



The Kadaster and Land Registry Office proudly celebrated the extraordinary contributions of two of its longest-serving staff members, Marie de Weever (left) and Austin Philips (right), who together have dedicated an astounding eighty years of service. Kadaster Director Benjamin Ortega (centre) thanked them for their legacy.



Utilities company GEBE announced in the third week of December that the development of its twenty-megawatt (MW) containerised power plant was "nearing completion". All critical equipment had been installed and was ready for use, NV GEBE stated.



Legendary American singer Dionne Warwick arrived in St. Maarten for her Gala Benefit Concert in aid of the Bridge 2 Bold St. Maarten Foundation on December 14, at the Casino Royale Theatre. The award-winning singer arrived five days before the concert, allowing her to celebrate her 84th birthday on St. Maarten on December 12.

The security concerns cast a shadow over the presentation of an economic impact study on the yachting and maritime industry, which highlighted its significant contribution to the economy of St. Maarten, accounting for 16.3 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Since the 1960s, yachting has grown exponentially, not least thanks to the Heineken Regatta, which celebrated its 44th edition in 2024.

To the relief of St. Maarten authorities, State Secretary for Kingdom Relations Zsolt Szabo clarified at the start of the month that there would be no financial cuts to the Dutch Caribbean Coast Guard, dismissing rumours and announcing that the Dutch cabinet would continue to invest in security and maintaining a strong rule of law. This would also include high officials, as State Secretary Szabo called for urgent and inclusive investigations into corruption across all parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, including St. Maarten.

-- Clarence Derby, longtime associate of Iranian American billionaire Hushang Ansary, was ordered by the Court of First Instance to



The holiday spirit came alive at Oranje Primary School as Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina stepped into the world of imagination and wonder during a special Christmas story reading for Teacher Chico Rollan's kindergarten class.



The sale or development of the Mullet Bay property is a slow-moving process that cannot be realised anytime soon, Central Bank of Curaçao and Sint Maarten (CBCS) President Richard Doornbosch said, indicating that many legal hurdles still need to be overcome. No offers were on the table by the second half of December.

pay back almost 3.85 million that he earned as a "ghost employee" of Curaçao-based insurance company Ennia. The court ruled that Derby had been wrongfully included on Ennia's payroll between 2008 and 2018.

-- Former United People's Party (UP) Member of Parliament (MP) Akeem Arindell stood trial in the Court of First Instance on December 18 for allegedly using two intermediaries to bribe many people to vote for him during the parliamentary election on January 11, 2024. The prosecutor has requested an eighteen-month prison sentence and a 6.5-year ban from being an elected official or a civil servant.

-- St. Maarten has become the target of a fraudulent maritime operation, with a website, [www.smtaregistry.com](http://www.smtaregistry.com), falsely claiming to represent 'MSTA-International Maritime Registries & Regulatory Inc'. The site lists vessels under a fictitious St. Maarten maritime flag,

alongside other countries perceived as having limited regulatory oversight. Within the kingdom, only the Netherlands has an officially recognised maritime flag. St. Maarten is claimed to have registered twelve oceangoing vessels, generating millions in registration fees.

-- The longest-running bankruptcy in the Dutch Kingdom lasted an astonishing 51 years. Leisure Properties NV, a real estate developer in St. Maarten, was declared bankrupt in 1973 after a failed project in Cole Bay, which included homes, shops, and restaurants. A total of 47 creditors came forward, mostly American buyers, who never received their purchases. The settlement process stalled, and several creditors became untraceable. With the approval of the Central Bank, the remaining funds have now been deposited in a consignment fund.

-- The Joint Court of Justice reduced the prison sentences of two former

civil servants found guilty of defrauding the government of St. Maarten out of nearly nine million guilders between 2010 and 2015. Michael Dijkhoffz, sentenced to four years and nine months, and Charley Lake, facing two years and nine months in prison, saw their sentences reduced by nine months and one year respectively because not all the corruption and financial charges had been proven on appeal.

-- On December 18, Finance Minister Marinka Gumbs tabled what she referred to as a 'conservative' draft 2025 budget, which shows a projected income of Naf 574 million and expenditure of Naf 572 million. This figure is expected to steadily climb in the coming years. The presentation of the draft budget was followed by three days of debates in Parliament, with the newly appointed Ministers of the Mercelina II cabinet presenting their goals for 2025 for their respective ministries.



## FRENCH SIDE YEAR IN REVIEW

*Much of 2024 was taken up with developments regarding Air Antilles and the threat that Beauperthuy succession land could be auctioned and lost to overseas investors until the Collectivité resolved to purchase the land. A Sous-Préfet and Assistant Director of Cabinet Services were appointed at the Préfecture, while the Collectivité hired a new Director General of Services (DGS). Authorities continued to be preoccupied with road safety and youth violence. The remodelled ferry terminal finally re-opened, and the conflict between SXM Truckers and Verde SXM was resolved with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in December. The Gendarmerie of St. Martin and St. Barths was granted full autonomy with a separation from Guadeloupe. The island mourned the passing of artist Ruby Bute, former teacher Omer Arrondell, and Oliver Gibbons from the Chamber of Commerce.*

### JANUARY

-- The Territorial Council voted in favour of creating a Territorial School of Public Management in St.

Martin, to be launched in February.

Supported by the Collectivité and its executive, the structure is designed to meet an identified need for professionalisation in the management of local public services. The project is to be technically managed by the Collectivité's Direction Générale des Services (DGS) and its Délégation Ressources Humaines (DRH).

-- An agreement was signed in Paris between Minister Delegate for Overseas France Philippe Vigier, Minister Delegate for Transport Clément Beaune, Secretary of State for the Sea Hervé Berville, and Chairman and CEO of the CMA CGN Group, to implement the Antilles Hub Project. Guadeloupe and Martinique joined forces to develop the Antilles Hub. The project will bring an additional 300,000 containers a year to the two islands.

-- A formal taking up of arms (Prise d'Armes) military ceremony was organised for the official installation and creation of the Commandement de la Gendarmerie de Saint-Martin et Saint-Barthélemy (COMGEND) in the presence of three-star Général Lionel Lavergne, Général de Corps d'Armée and Commandant of the Gendarmerie



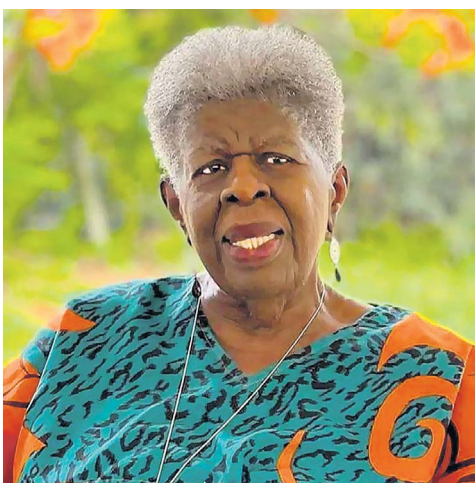
Elected officials are given a tour of the new promenades and multi-activity hall in French Quarter in March. (Robert Luckock photo)



Collectivité Vice President Bernadette Davis deposits an item into giant sorting bins at the Mont Vernon entrance on October 29. The Collectivité announced 125 voluntary drop-off points will soon be available around the French side. (Collectivité photo)



Dutch-side Governor Ajamu Baly and Préfet Vincent Berton lay wreaths at the border monument in Belle Plaine, French Quarter for St. Martin/St. Maarten Day on November 11. (Robert Luckock photo)



Much-loved artist, poet, and cultural ambassador Lady Ruby Bute passed away in November, leaving behind a vast body of her work in art and poems for present and future generations.



Following requests, Air Antilles announced an early morning flight from Grand Case to Guadeloupe starting January 6, 2025. (Robert Luckock photo)

in the overseas territories.

-- Préfet Vincent Berton took swift action on complaints made by inhabitants about two illegal fences erected on the beach at Anse des Sables Residence in Sandy Ground, which were preventing free access to beaches. The fences were subsequently taken down.

-- The Water Authority Établissement des Eaux et de l'Assainissement de Saint-Martin (EEASM) announced an extension to the current drinking water production plant in Galisbay, which will be built in 2027

to significantly improve capacity.

With a provisional budget of 21 million euros, the aim is to increase daily production from 8,000m<sup>3</sup> to around 14,000m<sup>3</sup>, explained Collectivité president Louis Mussington.

### FEBRUARY

-- The official presentation of the Territorial Olympic and Sports Committee (Comité Territorial Olympique et Sportif - CTOS) took place for the media and representatives from the sports clubs and associations of St. Martin.

This initiative is the result of the work of the Centre d'Excellence et d'Éducation par le Sport (CEES), to which the task of creating this new committee was entrusted in January 2023 by the Collectivité.

-- The locally made and produced domestic violence film "Chokehold" garnered a slew of international film awards. Its powerful subject matter resonated with audiences internationally and regionally, elevating director Joel Ayuk into the world of international cinema.

-- The SXM Truckers Association, representing hauliers who collect and transport waste to the eco-landfill in Cul-de-Sac, protested over the increase in tariffs imposed by management company Idex.

The association said the situation was threatening their livelihood, as the knock-on effect of higher tariffs meant that extra costs had to be passed on to the customer. Consequently, customers were no longer willing to pay the increases. The association added that this had worrying ramifications for illicit disposal of waste and damage to the environment unless the matter could be resolved quickly.

-- The Saint-Martin Energy Demand Management (EDM) Committee invited professionals in the sector—electricians, roofers, refrigeration engineers, air conditioning engineers, and plumbers—to an information meeting organised by the Collectivité and its partners, Electricité de France (EDF), and the French government.

Chaired by Vice President Bernadette Davis, the purpose of this meeting was to discuss the AGIR PLUS scheme with professionals from the sector. The aim was to encourage professionals to offer their cus-

tomers more energy-efficient equipment to reduce energy consumption without impacting quality of life.

### MARCH

-- The Collectivité confirmed that the abattoir in Grand Case will not open in 2024 as previously hoped, but instead will undergo approximately fourteen months of upgrading work. This transitional period will be used to renovate the infrastructure and modernise services, in particular through the construction of a meat cutting and packaging plant.

-- The provisional health approval granted in 2022 has not been renewed, as twelve points of non-compliance have been identified. These points must be rectified (procedures, training, equipment, etc.) before the abattoir can open.

-- The brand new, remodelled ferry terminal (Gare Maritime) was inaugurated on the Marigot waterfront in the presence of the French Delegated Minister in charge of Transportation, Patrice Vergriete, after long construction delays.

-- Residents of Les Hironnelles, Les Palmeraies, and Les Salines buildings in French Quarter received a significant upgrade in the quality of their day-to-day life with the inauguration of the Multi-Activity Hall and Promenades. The urban development and social cohesion project created by Semsamar was completed on time.

-- Chairman and CEO of Air Antilles, Jérôme Arnaud, was received by Executive Council members to present a progress report on the airline's situation to the elected members.

-- For operations to resume, the five aircraft still need to pass the technical audit stage in order to obtain the Air Transport Certificate, followed by the Operating Licence authorising the aircraft to fly, and finally the start of commercial operations.

### APRIL

-- Député (MP) for St. Martin and St. Barthélemy Frantz Gumbs met with the heads of Air France and Air Caraïbes following issues concerning regional and transatlantic travel for several months to understand why air fares should be so high.

-- The suspension of services between Paris Orly and

continued on page 15



## FRENCH SIDE...continued from page 14

St. Maarten's Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA) in December 2022 placed Air France in a monopoly situation. The disappearance of Air Antilles from Caribbean skies left Air Caraïbes with a monopoly on regional services.

-- An agreement between Préfet Vincent Berton, representing the State, and First Vice President of the Collectivité, Alain Richardson, at the Domaine Hotel in Anse Marcel, enacted the installation of a "Mission de Préfiguration," which will see the much-needed Territorial Fishing Committee become a reality, a body to represent fishermen and the industry that St. Martin has never had before.

-- Newly appointed Delegated Minister for Overseas France, Marie Guévenoux, attended the opening ceremony for the 17th Regional Cooperation Conference (Conférence de Coopération Régionale Antilles-Guyane - CCRAG) at the Secrets St. Martin Resort & Spa, Anse Marcel.

-- The Old House in French Quarter became a symbol of defiance against the threat of an impending auction that could see—unless negotiations turn in favour of the Collectivité to cancel the auction—three plots sold, including the Old House and Le Galion Ranch.

-- President Mussington

vowed to purchase the entire properties to preserve the land for St. Martiners, subject to a revaluation of the land before negotiating again with the administrator.

-- The first Public Management School for St. Martin (École du Management Public - EMP) officially opened in Grand Case Beach Club with an introduction to the first 20 candidates and an overview of the courses starting on the same day.

-- An agreement finally ended the public service delegation (DSP) entrusted to Semsamar since 2007, effectively ending a dispute between the Collectivité and mixed-capital company Semsamar since 2018 over the management of Marina Port La Royale.

### MAY

-- Air Antilles successfully obtained its Certificat de Transport Aérien (CTA). This major milestone marks the beginning of a promising new chapter for the airline and for the region's air connectivity, a press release from the company stated.

-- After a two-year hiatus, Air Caraïbes announced it was resuming the transatlantic service between Paris-Orly and Sint Maarten-Princess Juliana International Airport



The Collectivité honoured 27 employees for their over 35 years of service on Bastille Day. They each received the Médaille d'Honneur, Régionale, Départementale et Communale. (Collectivité photo)

(PJIA) in December 2024.

-- The auction that was due to take place in Guadeloupe of three parcels of land in the Beuperthuy succession, namely AW 141, AW142, and AW143, including the historic Old House in French Quarter, with a starting price of 2,500,000 euros, was suspended. Lawyers for the Collectivité and the administrator agreed to give the Collectivité more time to come up with an offer to purchase the entire properties, of which there are 26 parcels remaining.

-- Unions UNIT 978, Union Nationale des Syndicats Autonomes (UNSA), and Confédération Générale des Travailleurs de Guadeloupe (CGTG) demanded that President of the Collectivité Louis Mussington produce certain documents concerning a long-standing grievance over employee careers, promotion prospects, and salary reviews.

-- Les Fruits de Mer Association's Mark Yokoyama and Jenn Yerkes joined Ruby Bute in launching two books: \*Rising Spirit - The Autobiography of Lady Ruby Bute\* and the children's book \*Soualikiids\*, the latter illustrated by a selection of paintings by Ruby Bute from the 1980s.

-- The Collectivité announced that a protocol agreement had been signed between the three main unions and Collectivité President Louis Mussington to end the conflict over conditions for employees at the Ghislaine Rogers school in Grand Case.

-- Workers at the water production company SAUR went on strike over grievances they said had not been addressed by management. The stoppage caused a disruption in the supply



Ribbon cutting with Tourism Office officials for the opening of the 4th Gastronomy Festival Village on the waterfront on November 15. (Robert Luckock photo)



Préfet Vincent and Prosecutor Xavier Sicot on December 8 announced measures to curb a worrying increase in violence among the youth since September. (Robert Luckock photo)

network, with only one production line running and the Morne Valois reservoir at a low level, as breakages in the pipe network were not being repaired.

### JUNE

-- On the initiative of Second Vice-President of the Collectivité, Bernadette Davis, responsible for the Living Environment and Ecological Transition, representatives of the district councils were invited to Hô-

tel de la Collectivité to present Electricité de France's (EDF) \*Agir Plus\* scheme, which encourages professionals and private individuals to adopt a long-term energy-saving approach.

-- The voter turnout for the European Union (EU) elections in St. Martin was predictably low. France went to the polls on Sunday. Some 3,086 people voted, a participation rate of 15.43%. Of ballots cast, 75 were blank and 66 illegible, leav-

ing 2,945 actual votes expressed. The list that fared the best was Renaissance-Emmanuel Macron with 993 votes (33.72%).

-- Veteran fisherman Gary Page was honoured by the Collectivité for his contribution to developing the fishing industry in St. Martin since 1986 during a high-light between speeches at the 22nd Fish Day celebration on Sunday in Galisbay.



The symbolic key to the renovated Mary Star of the Sea church in Grand Case is held aloft by Father Alcineus Ruix André (left) as Bishop Guionou (second left), Vice President Bernadette Davis, and President Louis Mussington look on at the reopening ceremony on December 8. (Robert Luckock photo)



Blind tastings at the 4th Gastronomy Festival finals took place with international chefs to determine the restaurant winner of the "Best Table in St. Martin." (Robert Luckock photo)



## FRENCH SIDE...continued from page 15

-- Page, who is passing the baton onto his daughter, a certified fisherwoman in her own right, was presented with an engraved plaque and gifts by Third Vice President Dominique Louisy, and a bouquet of flowers for his daughter.

-- LF Group of Properties Ltd. confirmed that it had purchased the Royal Pasangrahan Guest House located on Front Street, Philipsburg, at auction. Tenants who occupy retail space have all been informed of the acquisition and do not have to move out, it was understood.

-- LF Group of Properties Ltd. comprises three part-

ners: Founding Partner and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Raul Max-Brown, a Canadian investment group, and William "BJ" Welch, the latter well known as the visionary caretaker behind the success of Loterie Farm.

-- The Secrets St. Martin Resort and Spa in Anse Marcel closed its doors on May 1. The St. Martin Tourism office stated when asked: "The hotel is closed for renovation, to reopen in December, but possibly not as a Secrets resort."

-- French side marine trades association Métimer announced its new board following the General Assembly on May 16. Outgoing



A symbolic copy of the Air Transport Certificate given to Air Antilles authorising the airline to start flight operations was presented by Collectivité President Louis Mussington at Grand Case Airport in May. (Collectivité photo)

President Béatrice Wojcik (Polypat Caraïbes) had previously stated her intention to hand over the reins to a new president and a younger dynamic team with new ideas.

## JULY

-- Around sixty fourth- and third-year students from Collège Mont des Accords, Collège Soualiga, and Collège Roche Gravée de Moho were honoured as "tourism ambassadors" at an awards ceremony held in Grand Case Beach Club.

-- On Bastille Day, the Collectivité honoured some 27 employees for their over 35 years of service. They each received the "Médaille d'Honneur, Régionale, Départementale et Communale". The medals were presented by President Mussington and Prefecture Secretary General Fabien Sésé.

-- Certificates of Honour were presented to Jacques "Billy D" Hamlet from SOS Radio, Diana Glasgow from the Association United Hands of St. Martin, five persons from SXM Water Truckers, and Gardien Brigadier Erika Daniel from the Territorial Police.



Marie-Hildegarde Chauveau joined the Préfecture team as Sous-Préfète to Préfet Vincent Berton on October 29 following the departure of Julien Marie. (Préfecture photo)



The Collectivité received the national France Station Nautique label on November 20, attesting to St. Martin's high standard and choice of nautical activities.



The brand new, re-modelled ferry terminal (Gare Maritime) was inaugurated on March 23 on the Marigot waterfront in the presence of the French Delegated Minister in charge of Transportation, Patrice Vergriete. (Robert Luckcock photo)



Préfet Vincent Berton presented national overseas engagement medals to several persons in the community at a ceremony in the Collectivité garden on Bastille Day. (Collectivité photo)

-- On the same day, Préfet Vincent Berton bestowed medals on three persons from civil society. Dania Amacin received the Medal of Honour for Overseas Engagement for her contribution and associative investment to the territory.

-- Patrice Seguin, Director of the former Beach Plaza Hotel, currently undergoing renovation, received the National Order of Merit Medal for his economic actions in support of the development of St. Martin. Director General of Dauphin Telecom, Eve Riboud, also received the National Order of Merit Medal.

-- Frantz Gumbs won the Député seat for St. Martin and Saint-Barthélemy constituency in the second-round run-off of the Legislative Elections against opponent Alexandra Questel of St. Barths. Frantz Gumbs obtained 3,942 votes (56.02% of votes cast) and Alexandra Questel 3,095 votes (43.98% of votes cast).

-- Préfet Vincent Berton visited the construction site for the new Cité Administrative et Judiciaire de Saint-Martin for a report on progress. The Cité Administrative et Judiciaire is a 38-million-euro investment made under the State's Recovery Plan. The project was first made public with the installation of information panels in February 2021.

-- The executive body of the Collectivité and the three trade unions signed an agreement to end the strike that began on May 27. The protocol put an end to the social conflict within the local authority and allowed public services to return to normal.

## AUGUST

-- The Regional Health Agency "Agence Régionale de Santé" (ARS) was informed of the detection of the first human case of infection by the West Nile Virus (WNV) on its territory. ARS reminded people of the steps they should take to limit the risk of the virus circulating.

-- The West Nile virus is currently considered to be the second most widespread virus after dengue fever. Circulation of this virus was revealed in Guadeloupe by a serological study of horses in 2002.

-- The official ceremony for the symbolic handing over of the air transportation certificate ("Certificat de Transport Aérien" - CTA) for Air Antilles to Collectivité President Louis Mussington took place at Espérance Airport, Grand Case.

-- The VIPs and media on board Air Antilles flight PTP/SFG landed at Grand Case airport, where they were greeted on the tarmac by a delegation from St.

Martin. Before the group entered the terminal building, a plaque was unveiled marking the occasion.

-- The Major Risks Department of the Collectivité and the French State (Préfecture) have identified around 30 abandoned or uninhabited but unseaworthy boats on the French side of the Simpson Bay Lagoon. During hurricane season, these boats represent a real danger and must be moved out of territorial waters by their owners.

## SEPTEMBER

-- A significant milestone in the renovation of Collège Roche Gravée de Moho, or "College 600," with the inauguration of eleven classrooms and several administration offices to complete the first phase of the project.

-- François-Noël Buffet became the new Minister for Overseas France. Since 2017 and Emmanuel Macron's arrival in power, François-Noël Buffet will be the seventh minister for Overseas France. François-Noël Buffet is a lawyer at the bar in Lyon, his hometown, and the co-author of several reports on the overseas territories.

-- A ceremony was held in the garden of Hôtel de la Collectivité to award nine Territorial Police officers.

continued on page 17



## FRENCH SIDE...continued from page 16

ers La Médaille d'honneur pour Acte de Courage et de Dévouement, a bronze medal awarded by the Ministry of Defence to persons who, in danger of losing their own life, act immediately to assist one or more persons in danger.

-- The Collectivité and its Transport and Regulations Department relaunched the urban transport line serving Sandy Ground—Marigot—Gare Routier (bus station)—Concordia and the surrounding area for the benefit of urban transport users.

-- Député for Saint-Martin and Saint Barthélemy Frantz Gumbs reacted to shipping company CMA CGM's ending of the Le Havre-Philipsburg (St. Maarten) route for ocean freight, expressing concern over the impact this will have.

-- Following the announcement of the Hub Antilles project, the direct Le Havre-Philipsburg route will no longer be operated by the group in 2025. Goods instead will be sent to Guadeloupe or Martinique first before arriving in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy.

### OCTOBER

-- The Collectivité and the regional health agency ARS of Guadeloupe, Saint-Mar-

tin, and Saint-Barthélemy informed the population that, as part of the daily vector surveillance carried out in the region, "Aedes Albopictus" larvae had been spotted in the Lorient district of St. Barths.

-- This is the first time that this mosquito – which is highly capable of transmitting Dengue, Chikungunya, and Zika – has been detected in the Caribbean.

-- Third Vice President of the Collectivité, Dominique Louisy, handed out the Cambridge certificate of English proficiency to 70 students from the 2023/2024 class at Lycée Robert Weinum in La Savane.

-- Obtaining the Cambridge C2 certificate of proficiency in English proves that a student has mastered English to a near-native level and can study or work in any type of English setting. The certificate is valid for life and internationally recognised.

-- An important milestone in nautical development was reached on October 15 when a concerted effort was made by the Collectivité in France to put forward arguments in favour of Saint-Martin obtaining the France Station Nautique Level Two designation.

-- This national label recog-

nises destinations that offer a wide range of quality nautical services. If successful, obtaining this certification would strengthen Saint-Martin's position as a leading destination for water sports and leisure activities.

-- Préfet Vincent Berton presided over a ceremony at which seven Medals of Honour for Overseas Engagement were awarded at the Bronze level, one at Silver level, and one Knight in the National Order of Merit medal.

-- Préfet Vincent Berton presented to the press two new major appointments to the Cabinet of the Préfecture. Marie-Hidegarde Chauveau is Chargée de Mission to the Préfet pending her confirmation as Director of Cabinet Services (Sous-Préfète). Marion Gonzalez-Duril is Deputy Director of Cabinet Services, and new intern Thomas Buffard also joined the team.

-- The Collectivité has been redoubling its efforts to improve waste management and sorting by multiplying the number of voluntary drop-off points around the territory for the convenience of residents to 125.

### NOVEMBER

-- Two major personalities in the community, artist Ruby Bute and former teacher Omer Arrondell, passed away in November.

-- "An accomplished artist, passionate representative of Saint Martin's art scene, especially with her painting and poetry that she practised with great talent, Ruby will forever remain an icon of our island," said President Mussington. "She was a magnificent ambassador of our culture and Caribbean spirit. She was also an example of wisdom and benevolence, and wonderfully represented the Saint-Martin community."

-- The fourth edition of the Gastronomy Festival, organised by the St. Martin Tourism Office, got underway at 978 Beach Lounge in Friar's Bay with a press conference launch coinciding with the pre-event "Taste of Sunrise", a Caribbean brunch featuring local chefs and ambassadors, Shane Huggins and Ashanta Daniel.

-- Les Galets, a gourmet restaurant in Orient Bay, emerged as the winner of the "Best Table in Saint-Martin" trophy when results of the four finalists were announced at Friday night's closing party for the 2024 Gastronomy Festival.

-- Electricité de France (EDF) has been coping with production challenges at its Galisbay plant for several weeks, like those of the Dutch side's utility provider GEBE in recent months, due to ageing engines working beyond their lifespan that require constant maintenance and repairs.

-- Recent inspections carried out by the State in Saint-Martin and Saint-Barthélemy revealed that some 29 establishments have broken the law in several areas and risk a temporary administrative closure for up to three months by decision of the Préfet.

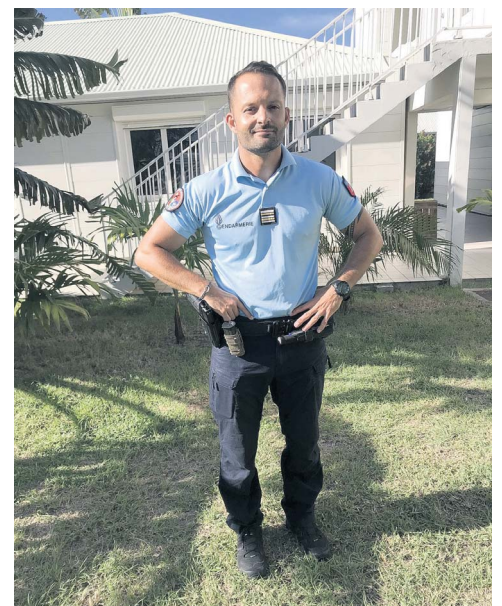
-- An agreement establishing the Saint-Martin Land Agency was signed at the Hôtel de la Collectivité in the presence of the media and teams from the Collectivité and French State who have been involved in this long-term project.

### DECEMBER

-- The huge turnout from the public from both sides of the island made the cultural celebration of Lady Ruby Bute's life at her Silk Cotton Grove estate home in Friar's Bay a joyous, colourful occasion reflecting the late artist's life and prolific body of work.

-- Bright colours were the order of the evening, with many ladies dressed in traditional cultural frocks, while a giant screen projected archived photos of Ruby, interspersed with some of her paintings. The funeral service also took place at Silk Cotton Grove Estate two days later, with elected officials from both governments expressing their sadness at her passing.

-- The restored "Mary Star of the Sea" Catholic church in Grand Case reopened on December 8 on the eve of



Lt. Colonel Hugues Loyez took over from Lt. Colonel Maxime Wintzer-Wehekind as Head of the Gendarmerie of Saint-Martin and Saint Barthélemy on August 1. (Robert Luckock photo)



Préfet Vincent Berton presented a national medal to Fire Chief Cyril Pallud on his departure from Saint Martin to Guadeloupe on July 17. The new Fire Chief of the Sapeurs-Pompiers is Anthony Arnould, pictured seated, right. (Robert Luckock photo)

the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary with a religious ceremony attended by elected officials and the diocese of Guadeloupe, represented by Bishop Guirougou and Father Alcineux Rulx André.

-- The Collectivité appointed a new Director General of Services (DGS), Natacha Pétrine, to replace Albert Holl.

-- Following requests from the business sector, Air Antilles announced that a flight with same-day return will depart from Saint-Martin to Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe, at 7:30am Monday to Friday from January 6, 2025, operated by a 19-seater Twin Otter. It also confirmed that all five aircraft will be back in operation at the end of December.

-- The long-standing conflict between the SXM Truckers Association and management of the eco-

landfill in Grandes Cayes, Verde SXM-IDEX, over many issues affecting hauliers at the site was partially resolved with the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by Collectivité President Louis Mussington, Préfet Vincent Berton, Gerald Gumbs representing SXM Truckers, and director Maxime Arnal from VERDE SXM-IDEX.

-- Préfet Vincent Berton said the escalation of violence among the youth since September, particularly with firearms, is extremely worrying and called for a collective effort to get to the root of the problem.

-- He referred to the shooting in Sandy Ground on Saturday, November 30, in which two minors, aged 17 and 14, were caught in the crossfire when a passing car containing three masked individuals fired shots into a group of youngsters.



Préfet Vincent Berton visited the construction site for the new 38-million-euro Cité Administrative et Judiciaire de Saint-Martin for a report on progress. (Robert Luckock photo)



Préfet Vincent Berton awarded medals to nine Territorial Police officers on June 28 for acts of bravery during their duties. (Robert Luckock photo)



## SABA YEAR IN REVIEW

### JANUARY

-- An off-duty police officer drew his service weapon and pointed it at another man during a party on January 1. The act was captured on a mobile phone video and shared widely on social media, causing an uproar in the Saba community. The officer was suspended, with the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force KPCN and the Prosecutor's Office launching separate investigations into misconduct and excessive force.

-- Anton Hermans, the head of Saba's combined school board, resigned amid financial troubles at Sacred Heart School, the island's only primary school. The Dutch government also announced that it would step in to "closely monitor the financial situation." The resignation came about a month after news broke that 11 school staff were laid off because of financial constraints.

-- Saba Electric Company celebrated its tenth year as a stand-alone electricity company, after being officially divided from NV GEBE on January 1, 2014.

To mark the occasion, an official ceremony and gathering for the public was held outside its main office in The Bottom.

### FEBRUARY

-- Acid was thrown onto mechanical parts of the only government-owned crane in Saba's harbour, rendering it inoperable in this apparent case of vandalism. Because it is used to haul boats out of the water during periods of rough seas, the crane being out of commission came at great expense to Saba fishermen. With bad weather forecast, they had little option but to travel to St. Maarten for safe anchorage. According to one fisherman, this trip cost more than US \$1,000 in fuel expenses and docking fees.

-- Six persons were certified under the hospitality instructor course CHI, which provided in-service training for workers in the hospitality industry in St. Eustatius and Saba. Part of a Dutch government training initiative, the course was provided by St. Maarten's National Institute for Professional

Advancement (NIPA), in collaboration with the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute (AHLEI).

### MARCH

-- The 35th anniversary of the murder of late Police Officer Samuel A. Charles was marked with a solemn ceremony in The Bottom on March 14. The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force KPCN, along with Charles' family, organised a church service and wreath-laying at his gravesite, as well as at the monument at the site of the tragic incident and his bust in front of the police station.

-- Some proposed changes to the WolBES and FinBES laws were announced after a summit in the Netherlands. Saba will have permanent representation in The Hague and will be involved earlier in drafting policy and legislation. There will be different levels of financial supervision per island. Additionally, the number of Island Council members will be increased from five to seven in 2027, and the number of Commissioners will be raised from two to three. It would be evaluated whether increasing the number of Island Council members will be necessary in 2031 and 2035.

-- Climate scientists Iris Keizer and Nadia Bloemendaal of the Royal Netherlands Meteorological Institute KNMI visited Saba to share their knowledge on climate change with various stakeholders and the public. Their visit was in relation to the climate scenarios report that KNMI published in October 2023. For the first time, the Caribbean Netherlands was included in this report, which forecasts possible future climate scenarios for the islands in relation to climate change.

-- The lights at Saba's Government Administration Building were turned off for sixty minutes in observance of Earth Hour, an annual environmental event organised by international conservation group World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Civil servants prepared for Earth Hour by turning off the lights in their offices at the end of the workday, and many reportedly powered down their workspaces too. Saba Electric Company participated by turning off the lights of its main office in The Bottom. The government-owned company also doused streetlights in Fort Gut and Hell's Gate Gut.



Saba's Youth Council assisted Island Governor Johnson in hoisting the Saba flag outside the Government Administration Building during this year's Saba Day ceremony on December 6. (Photo by The Spot Youth Center Saba).



The 48th edition of Saba Carnival wrapped up in mid-July with the Last Lap parade (pictured) and the traditional burning of the Momo.



Saba hosted the Rum and Lobster Fest in early November, a ten-day celebration of the island's rich flavours and vibrant culture.

### APRIL

-- The Saba government announced that it will receive a search and rescue (SAR) boat in the first half of 2025, which will be used to assist people who need help in Saba's waters. There will be a budget for the vessel and its maintenance, as well as for professional

equipment, annual training for its crew, and the establishment of a management organisation.

-- All the members of Saba's school boards resigned following a visit by Dutch government education inspectors from April 9-16, a move highlighting the deepening of the school

mismanagement crisis.

-- Vernisha Robinson is the only Saban in a group of fifteen cadets from the Caribbean Netherlands to begin training for the Royal Dutch Marechaussee KMar.

continued on page 19



Princess Beatrix of the Netherlands visited the island in November as part of her visit to the Dutch Caribbean, which focused on nature education and conservation.



Some boat owners had their vessels taken out of the water via a crane as Saba prepared for the passing of Tropical Storm Ernesto in early August. Others took their boats to dock in St. Maarten.



## SABA...continued from page 18

## MAY

-- Saba received a new vehicle for its special enforcement officers, becoming the first island in the Caribbean Netherlands to do so. The new vehicle has a distinctive and recognisable livery and is equipped with speakers, a radio system, and a siren.

-- State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitisation Alexandra van Huffelen unveiled the completion of the social housing project Under the Hill-2. The project consisted of three buildings with a total of 18 homes, ranging from one to three bedrooms.

## JUNE

-- The Saba government handed out a fine of US

\$1,360 to a supermarket for selling seven vaping devices, which have been banned since September 2023 after the passing of a new tobacco ordinance.

-- About forty pupils of Sacred Heart School took the stage at Princess Juliana Sports Field to perform for parents, teachers, and other community members as part of the first edition of "Leerokest Saba". Children from grade two to six sang and played various instruments, such as violin, cello, trumpet, flute, clarinet, guitar, drums, bass guitar, and piano.

## JULY

-- The off-duty police officer who drew his service weapon and pointed it at another man during a party

on January 1 was officially fired by the Caribbean Netherlands Police Force KPCN for severe dereliction of duty.

-- Naima Smith won the first-ever Mini Miss Saba Cultural Pageant. There were four young girls vying for the crown. In addition to eventual winner Naima, the other contestants were Bernanique Hassell, McKayla DaCosta, and Ocean Hughes.

## AUGUST

-- Saba's emergency services had to clear roads of fallen trees and rocks following torrential rains and flash flooding caused by the passing of Tropical Storm Ernesto. The grey jetty and multi-purpose pier in Fort Bay harbour, also known as the "fisherman's pier", had to be closed due to rock debris.

-- Saba government started its car wreck and metal waste removal project, which saw a total of 35 non-working vehicles removed from private and public spaces.

## \*\*SEPTEMBER\*\*

-- The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force recorded the first arrest for drunk driving since breathalyser tests were introduced.

-- The Island Council unanimously passed a motion to establish a process for naming streets, buildings, monuments, and other landmarks after renowned local individuals. The motion was introduced by PEP Island Council Member Julio Every.

-- More than 60 residents signed a petition in protest of government plans to transition the historic Queen Wilhelmina Park into a playground. A smaller group of demonstrators walked from the park to the Government Administration Building, where politician and community activist Dave Levenstone presented the petition to Island Governor Jonathan Johnson.

-- Two shipping companies, the local agents for a combined five courier and mail delivery services, scrambled for more than a week to transport hundreds of pounds of stranded parcels and air mail after St. Maarten's government-owned airline Winair imposed a strict 20-kilogram cargo limit.

-- A serious car accident on Spring Bay Road left



Churchgoers receiving ashes at Sacred Heart Church during midday Mass on Ash Wednesday.



The group of Saba childcare workers received diplomas in January after completing professional development courses facilitated by St. Maarten's National Institute for Professional Advancement (NIPA).



Commissioner Eviton Heyliger (left) and Mini Miss Saba Naima Smith (right) opened the gates to the Carnival Village in July with a symbolic key, marking the start of the week-long Saba Carnival.



Island Governor Jonathan Johnson (right) presented a royal decoration to Saba steel pan player Rupert Karel Sorton (left), making him the island's most recent recipient of the Order of Orange-Nassau.

one person injured. The driver was travelling downhill when they experienced a brake failure and lost control. The vehicle then plummeted roughly 30 metres down the hill, eventually coming to a stop upside down against a tree and rocks.

-- Oliver Klokman swam around Saba in seven hours and 34 minutes. He may be the first person to ever do so.

## OCTOBER

-- Saba became the first island in the Caribbean Netherlands to launch the Govroam and Publicroam Wi-Fi services, which happened during the working visit of Dutch State Secretary of Kingdom Relations and Digitalisation Zsolt Szabo.

-- Saba government and Ballast Nedam International Projects signed the construction contract for the long-awaited Black Rocks harbour. This move paved the way for the "construction of the marine works" at the new harbour site to start after the 2025 Atlantic hurricane season. The project is scheduled to end in December 2026.

-- Senad Cejvan, the man who strangled Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM) student Kavya Guda (24) to death in April 2015, was extradited to Bonaire to serve his eleven-year sentence for manslaughter.

## NOVEMBER

-- The Executive Council sent a letter to Roman Catholic Bishop Luis Seco to outline several reforms needed to improve education at Sacred Heart School, the island's only primary school, which was still mired in scandal.

-- An administrative judge dismissed a case initiated by nine goat owners who wanted the government to immediately halt its controversial culling programme. The goat owners based their case on a government letter issued in May 2021. This was the start of what has become more than three years of repeated culling efforts under the government's livestock control project, where thousands of animals have been shot and killed by local and foreign hunters.

## DECEMBER

-- The Court of First In-

stance acquitted a woman accused of bribing three people to vote for her uncle in the 2023 Island Council election. Alicia Wilson (38) was also found not guilty of pressuring another 10 to sign away their ballots via the proxy system, which allows someone to vote on another person's behalf. Although she avoided conviction on electoral fraud charges, Wilson was found guilty of an unrelated crime involving financial misconduct. The judge considered it proven that she had defrauded Qredits, a financial institution that offers loans to entrepreneurs and small businesses, out of a little more than US \$100,000 in 2019.

-- A total of five men were arrested in connection with a bar fight on Saba Day that ended with someone being stabbed and taken to hospital.

-- Saba Comprehensive School held a graduation ceremony at Saba University School of Medicine (SUSOM) for the 15 graduates of the class of 2023-2024. Beanna Sarmiento won the Valedictorian Award, while Dane-Ezekiel Simmons received the Salutatorian Award.



## ST. EUSTATIUS YEAR IN REVIEW

### JANUARY

-- Bethel Methodist Church marked a significant dual anniversary, celebrating 200 years of the Methodist faith on the island and the 180th anniversary of the congregation's chapel.

-- Wearing matching black t-shirts imprinted with the messages "Uniforms Now" and "Enough is Enough," staff of Queen Beatrix Medical Center gathered in protest to demand new uniforms and shoes, which some claim to have not received in as many as four years. All for One Union wanted the hospital to reimburse workers US \$500 for each year.

-- Caretaker Dutch Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Mariëtte Paul, Island Commissioner Reuben Merkmán, and representatives of various local school boards signed the Third Education Agenda. This agreement outlines how stakeholders on the island and in the Netherlands will work together to improve the quality of education.

-- St. Eustatius Utility Company STUCO celebrated

its tenth anniversary. It began operations on January 1, 2014, manned by a 17-member staff after being split from NV GEBE.

### FEBRUARY

-- An off-duty police officer threatened to shoot another man during an early morning fight outside an entertainment establishment. A video depicted four men – two off-duty officers against two civilians – chasing each other while kicking and throwing punches. The Caribbean Netherlands Police Force KPCN supported the officers' actions, saying they had tried to stop a previous fight but were attacked and "had to use physical force to defend themselves." Their opponents were later arrested for attempted manslaughter and weapons possession.

-- The St. Eustatius Farmers' Cooperative received a US \$10,885 subsidy from the government, a move aimed at jump-starting the revival of the agricultural collective.

-- Customs officials went on strike for two days, and cargo clearance at the har-

bour came to a standstill. The protest ended after the government and Caribbean Netherlands Customs reached an undisclosed agreement. Little was publicly disclosed about the agreement's content or the officers' grievances, except that parking spaces outside the harbour compound would be made available to officers.

### MARCH

-- The first baby born in St. Eustatius in 2024 was welcomed into the world at 6:31 am on March 7. The baby boy, named Quavious Williams, weighed 3,434 grammes and measured 54 centimetres in length. His proud parents are Olivia Williams and Quentin Redan. He was delivered by Dr. Dorette Cortar at Queen Beatrix Medical Center.

-- Some proposed changes to the WolBES and FinBES laws were announced after a summit in the Netherlands. St. Eustatius will have permanent representation in The Hague and will be involved earlier in drafting policy and legislation. There will be different levels of financial supervision per island. Additionally, the number of Island Council Members will be increased to seven in 2027 and the number of Commissioners will be raised to three or four. It will be evaluated whether increasing the number of Island Council Members will be necessary in 2031 and 2035.

-- The St. Eustatius Historical Foundation, which manages the Simon Doncker Museum, celebrated its 50th anniversary.

-- The tenth year of the volunteering campaign Statia DOET saw a record 520 people register to assist various projects across the island.

-- The St. Eustatius African Burial Ground Alliance launched its heritage project, "Remember Statia: Tracing Our Origins," with a community gathering and documentary screening at Gertrude Judson Bicentennial Public Library.

### APRIL

-- Alida Francis became Island Governor, the first woman to take up the position. Her appointment marked the end of the Dutch government's administrative intervention in St. Eustatius, which began in 2018.

-- Sharon Hassell was appointed and sworn in as Acting Island Governor.



The 60th anniversary of Statia Carnival took place from July 25 to August 5, marked by colourful parades and vibrant concerts.



A service was held in Oranjestraat on June 12 to commemorate the 1848 slave revolt that took place at the very same location more than a century ago.



A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in October between the St. Eustatius government and a private investor to create a new medical university on the island. The island previously had a medical school, but it was shuttered in 2013. In the photo: Island Governor Alida Francis (right), Commissioner Reuben Merkmán (centre), and Commissioner Rechelline Leerdam.



A sport utility vehicle (SUV) was destroyed in a fire on March 19. The blaze, which sent a large funnel of smoke billowing into the sky, is believed to have been caused by a mechanical malfunction, which started under the hood and spread quickly throughout the vehicle. The driver was unharmed.

-- Known as a tireless advocate for youth, Dion "Mega D" Humphreys became St. Eustatius' newest member of the Order of Orange-Nassau.

### MAY

-- Motorists were no longer allowed to drive without seatbelts or hold their mobile phones while driving, and cyclists were no longer allowed to ride without helmets after enforcement of the Road Traffic Ordinance began on May 1. This local law was adopted by the Island Council in September 2022.

-- Wreaths were laid at Fort Oranje and Salem Cemetery as part of the island's commemoration for those who served in the armed forces and died in war.

-- A letter containing references to the leaders of the 1848 slave uprising in St. Eustatius is part of new information that was shared with the island government. Raymond Hernandez, Director of Aruba's National Archives, shared the information during the Dutch Caribbean Heritage Plat-

form (DCHP) conference from May 5-9.

-- The Island Council approved changes to local rent legislation, which paved the way for tenants who rent from Statia Housing Foundation (SHF) to save up to US \$1,300 per year. With the amendment to the Rent Tribunal and Rent Prices Ordinance, SHF was allowed to use the statutory minimum wage to determine how much rent to charge tenants.

### JUNE

-- The voter turnout for the European Parliament election was almost 9.9%, as 189 people cast ballots from the pool of 1,918 eligible voters. This was much lower than the 46.2% turnout recorded in the European Netherlands.

-- The St. Eustatius Lions Club installed a new board, with Shanna Mercera-Gibbs becoming club president for the second time.

### JULY

-- The Island Council dismissed Commissioner Ar-

lene Spanner-Schmidt, with the only votes being cast by her own party and the opposition not in the legislative hall. The no-confidence motion read by Island Council Member and Progressive Labour Party (PLP) leader Rechelline Leerdam passed two-to-one in a secret ballot.

-- Rechelline Leerdam was appointed Commissioner during an extraordinary Island Council meeting, taking up the vacant post following the dismissal of Arlene Spanner-Schmidt. Leerdam's appointment passed unanimously, with all four Island Council Members voting in favour, including Democratic Party (DP) leader Raquel Spanner-Carty, the only member of the opposition in attendance. Leerdam's move to the Executive Council freed up her seat for Derrick Simmons, PLP's number four candidate in the March 2023 election. Simmons' appointment to the five-member legislative body also passed unanimously.



## ST. EUSTATIUS...continued from page 20

## AUGUST

-- Gwendoline van Putten GvP School welcomed a total of fourteen new teachers and staff for the start of the 2024/2025 academic year. GvP also added four to its Board of Directors, bringing the total number of board members to seven.

-- While Tropical Storm Ernesto passed very close to the island in early August, it only caused minor damage with its heavy rainfall and high winds. There was evidence of erosion and landslides in the areas of White Wall and behind the mountain, according to disaster management officials. There were also reports of downed trees and power outages.

## SEPTEMBER

-- Sophia Busby, the oldest living person in St. Eustatius, turned 105. The Island Council later approved a motion to rename a road in her honour.

-- A 37-year-old man was arrested for trespassing onto the airport's secure area, vandalising several

runway lights, and setting a windsock on fire. He was held in police custody a total of three separate times in September on various charges, including arson, burglary, destruction of property, and possession of a knife. He was reportedly released from jail earlier the very same day that he cut through the airport's fence.

## OCTOBER

-- The St. Eustatius government signed an agreement with an undisclosed airline investor, which it described as an important step towards improving air travel to the island.

-- Two local cemeteries of enslaved people received the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Routes of Enslaved Peoples label. Kenneth Cuvaley, President of St. Eustatius Afrikan Burial Ground Alliance, which started the application for the Golden Rock and Godet burial grounds, described this as "incredible news" for the St. Eustatius community.



St. Eustatius Island Council Member Glenville Schmidt chaired a summit of the Executive and Island Councils of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba in January that discussed changes to the WolBES and FinBES laws.

-- A man was safely rescued after his boat Real Therapy capsized between St. Eustatius and St. Kitts.

## NOVEMBER

-- St. Eustatius Utility Company STUCO rationed water for two days in early



Heritage Inspector Raimie Richardson (left) presenting to members of the Dutch First Chamber of Parliament at St. Eustatius Historical Foundation Simon Doncher Museum. An eighteen-member delegation of the First Chamber's Permanent Committee for Kingdom Relations had a working visit to St. Eustatius in February.



Roman Catholic Bishop Luis Secco ordained Valentine Ricardo Fortin (centre, kneeling) as a deacon during a special service in St. Eustatius in April.



The sounds of honking horns spread across the island in December as Santa Claus and his elves spread some cheer.

November, shutting off the taps for up to six hours a day. The lack of water led some schools to close their doors. The island had been last hit by water rationing in November 2020.

-- A fishing team from St. Eustatius placed first in the annual St. Maarten Wahoo Tournament. Their return to the island was marked by horns and cheers from on-lookers on the boardwalk. The team donated their winning catch to two senior citizen homes.

-- A group of residents selected a design for the memorial that will honour the remains of the enslaved people who were excavated at Golden Rock plantation. The design features an octagon-shaped memorial space spanning approximately 2,500 square metres. Key elements include an information centre, a meeting room, an office at the

entrance, two mass graves along a path, spaces for future ancestral reburials, and a path leading to the main building.

-- Residents and visitors gathered at Fort Oranje on Statia Day, November 16, to commemorate the 248th anniversary of the first salute to the United States.

-- The Committee for Financial Supervision (CFT) reported that St. Eustatius' 2025 budget was approved on time and showed a surplus that can absorb unexpected setbacks.

-- The grand opening of The Hill compound marked the completion of an extensive restoration of this monument by the Caribbean Netherlands Pension Fund (PCN). The opening ceremony brought together key stakeholders, dignitaries, and community members to celebrate the revitalisation

of this historic site.

## DECEMBER

-- Mega D Youth Foundation and Boombastic hosted a delegation of experts in cultural education, comprising two persons from the National Center of Expertise for Cultural Education and Amateur Arts and one from Meer Muziek in de Klas. Their visit aimed to explore ways to make art and culture accessible to everyone, regardless of age, ethnicity, or social status.

-- The Statia Health Care Steering Committee and the Netherlands-based AMPC International Health Consultants signed a contract for the first phase of developing a new multi-purpose care and assisted living facility, a move the signatories say marks a significant milestone in improving the island's healthcare infrastructure.



# ANGUILLA YEAR IN REVIEW

## JANUARY

-- A shooting incident resulted in the death of a 27-year-old male at a store in The Valley.

-- Aurora Golf Resort opened its Water Park, featuring a swimming pool, a lazy river, three water slides, and a kids' splash pool.

-- Tasers were introduced to Anguilla. A UK instructor trained a group of Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) officers in the use of tasers, which will add to the non-lethal options available to the RAPF.

-- A groundbreaking ceremony was held for a new cargo facility at the Clayton J Lloyd International Airport. It is designed as a state-of-the-art multipurpose facility for incoming and outgoing customs and will include warehouses and other facilities.

-- An MOU was signed with Phillip McCabe, a well-known hotelier from Naples, Florida. The development will be at Savannah Bay and will include two hotels, a marina, a yacht club, a bird sanctuary, as well as condos, villas, and cottages. No start date was provided.

## FEBRUARY

-- Five resorts in Anguilla received top awards in the Forbes Travel Awards. A five-star rating was given

to Cap Juluca and Four Seasons, and a four-star rating to Aurora and Quintessence.

-- An armed daylight robbery took place at the Anguilla Electronics Store. Four young men were taken into custody, later charged, and put in prison.

-- The Anguilla United Front party, led by Cora Richardson Hodge, introduced three new members to their team. Davon Carty will compete for Road North, Pat Mardenborough for Road South, and Miguel Leveret as an island-wide candidate. Hodge stated that the AUF has unity, hope, vision, and a capable, qualified team.

-- HMS "Trent", a Royal Navy warship, visited Anguilla. The ship is in the Caribbean to assist islands after a hurricane or other disaster and to counter illicit trafficking of narcotics.

## MARCH

-- The first artificial turf football field was opened, funded by FIFA at a cost of US\$1 million.

-- A shooting incident occurred at South Hill where two young men were wounded by gunshots, with one in critical condition and flown off-island for treatment.

-- Anguilla hosted a PAHO meeting for the improvement of the Caribbean Electronic Nominal Vaccination Registry System. Eight countries, including Anguilla, are

using the system.

-- Commissioner of Police Robert Clark announced plans to increase border patrols. He spoke about the rise in crime, especially shootings, and the measures planned to address this.

-- Electronic manifesting for ferries and other boats was introduced to enhance efficiency and improve service.

-- The groundbreaking for the new Clayton J Lloyd International Airport took place. Designed by Avia NG and local architect Raoul Vanterpool, it will be three times larger than the existing terminal, covering 4,000 square metres. The construction company is Aecon of Canada.

## APRIL

-- Speaker of the House of Assembly Barbara Webster-Bourne and Clerk of the House Lenox Proctor attended the Overseas Territories Speakers' Conference in the Turks and Caicos. Webster-Bourne delivered the keynote address.

-- The UK's Nature Minister, Rebecca Pow, visited Anguilla and viewed some of the island's environmental projects. She met with the Minister for Sustainability, Innovation and the Environment, Quincia Gumbs Marie, and the Director of the National Trust, Farah Mukhida. She expressed being impressed with the work, much of which was made possible by the Darwin Plus Initiative.

-- Fifteen members of the Royal Engineers UK visited Anguilla for two weeks to identify critical and vulnerable infrastructure. This was part of broader work to manage risks from natural disasters.

## MAY

-- Several customers of Republic Bank discovered that their accounts were empty, as the bank had debited all outstanding e-commerce and point-of-sale transactions. Later in the week, protests were held by around 200 customers, and letters were presented to the bank manager.

-- A bomb threat was received at the Clayton J Lloyd International Airport by the Royal Anguilla Police Force. The airport was evacuated, and police and customs, with the assistance of dogs, conducted a two-hour search that found no bomb. Business resumed within two hours.

-- Officers from the Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) executed a search warrant at a home in Island Harbour. During the operation, they recovered two Glock pistols, an automatic rifle, and over 200 rounds of ammunition. Following this operation, William Herbert Sr was charged with possession of firearms, ammunition, and cocaine. William Herbert Jr was charged with firearm possession and the manufacturing of firearms.

-- Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster, who is also Minister of Health, and his Permanent Secretary travelled to the British Virgin Islands to study the national health insurance plan there. The discussions were reportedly useful in helping Anguilla formulate its own National Health Insurance scheme.

-- Anguilla Day, with the theme "Honouring our Past, Celebrating our Present, Building our Future," took place on May 30 with a parade at Ronald Webster Park led by the Royal Anguilla Police Force Community Band. The parade included the Police, Prison Officers, Cadets, Boys Brigade, Pathfinders, Scouts, Guides, Brownies, and more. Governor Julia Crouch, Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster, and the Leader of the Opposition, Cora Richardson Hodge, gave speeches to the many people gathered at the park. Seven individuals were awarded the Anguilla Badge of Honour and King's Certificate for their contributions to social development.

## JUNE

-- De Wizard won the round-the-island Premier's Cup boat race on Anguilla Day, with UFO, Justice, Light and Peace, and Bush Boys following. Large crowds gathered at Sandy Ground to watch the finish and enjoy the food and music.

-- Elliott Forbes, retired Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Anguilla Police Force, was presented with the Overseas Territories Police Medal by Governor Julia Crouch for his 36 years of service.

-- Governor Julia Crouch presented the King Charles III Coronation Medal to qualifying members of the Anguillian Fire and Rescue Service, Her Majesty's Prison Service, and the Royal Anguilla Police Force. "This medal provides a fitting recognition of your dedicated public service and sacrifice. Each of you is a true hero, and we owe you sincere gratitude and thanks for



Police Band at the Anguilla Day Parade



Stephen Doughty (3rd left), UK Minister for the Overseas Territories meeting with the Governor and members of government.

your continued efforts to ensure our safety," the Governor said.

-- Anguilla was represented at the Red Ensign Group (REG) Conference in Jersey. The conference brought together crown dependencies, overseas territories, and other key maritime stakeholders to discuss the operation of ship registries, maritime spatial planning, foreign vessel inspections, maritime sanctions implementation, and effective search and rescue. Approximately 80 delegates from all sixteen REG maritime administrations attended to discuss a range of standards and ways to improve the performance of the Registers internationally. Anguilla's delegation included P. Fairbrother, S. Fleming, H. Henderson, K. Cutler, and J. Hughes.

## JULY

-- A delegation from Anguilla attended the Caribbean Tourism Organization's Caribbean Week from June 17-21. This year's theme was "Connecting the Globe, Celebrating Diversity" and proved to be an invaluable forum for discussing the challenges and opportunities facing the Caribbean region. The delegation included Minister of Infrastructure and Tourism Haydn Hughes, Director of Tourism Stacey Liburd, and Deputy Director Chantelle Richardson.

-- The Anguilla Government sent a donation of EC\$500,000 to Grenada and St. Vincent and the Grenadines for hurricane relief and recovery efforts following the destruction caused by Hurricane Beryl.

-- The newly built Land-some Bowl Cultural Centre was opened on July 18. Property and investment company Dart, which owns Four Seasons Resort and Residences Anguilla, funded the building as part of its partnership agreement with the government. The US\$5 million project took just six months from design to completion. Governor Julia Crouch, Premier Ellis Webster, and ministers Haydn Hughes and Dee-Ann Kentish-Rogers cut the ribbon at the entrance to the public facility.

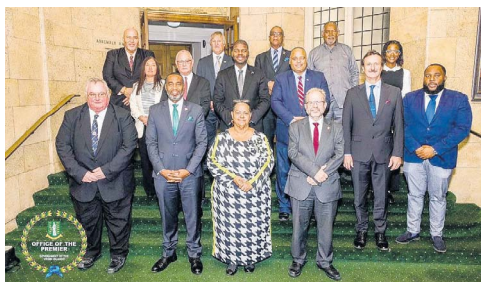
-- A new minister for the Overseas Territories was appointed following the election of the Labour government to power in the UK. David Lammy is now the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Affairs.

-- An armed robbery was reported at a supermarket in East End. The perpetrator was shot and killed.

-- The Department of Education announced increased security for all schools on the island to enhance the safety of teachers, students, and staff in the primary and secondary campuses. The cost of this initiative is EC\$4 million, which was approved recently in the Supplementary Budget. The approach is multi-layered and includes security services such as guards, gates and perimeter fencing, intercom/emergency alert systems, installation of cameras, and additional traffic/security personnel.

-- Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster was installed as the chair of the Eastern Caribbean

continued on page 23



Overseas Territories leaders at the Joint Ministerial Conference



De Wizard crew celebrating the Championship win



## ANGUILLA...continued from page 22

bean Central Bank (ECCB) Monetary Council. The event took place at the Aurora Resort and Golf Club. Governor of the ECCB Timothy Antoine presented his report.

- A shooting incident occurred outside the Court House. A 33-year-old male from Bad Cox was killed while in his car outside the Court House. There were many reactions to this, including from Governor Julia Crouch, Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster, Court House officials, and others.

### AUGUST

-- A total of 47 CCTV cameras were installed around the island with 24/7 monitoring. The Government allocated EC\$1 million in its December budget for cross-island CCTV infrastructure. While the procurement for this investment is underway, to immediately provide protection for residents and visitors, the 47 cameras have been installed. These are placed throughout The Valley and on the route to Sandy Ground for J'Ouvert.

-- In the Miss Anguilla Pageant, held on Tuesday, August 6, at the Landsome Bowl Cultural Centre, Nisha Monique Dupuis was declared the winner. She won the Best Swimsuit competition, Best Cultural Wear, and Best Talent. She is the lucky winner of a brand-new Changan CS 35 Plus, donated by Motor World of St Martin, among other prizes.

-- The Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) reported a shooting incident at Well Road at around 9.40 pm on Sunday, August 11. One person was killed, and two others received medical attention for gunshot wounds.

-- The opposition party Anguilla United Front presented a plan to remove the

13% Goods and Services Tax (GST) from retailers, wholesalers, manufacturers, and restaurants. The plan also included additional relief by removing GST at the ports and replacing it with a 9% import duty. Leader of the party, Cora Richardson Hodge, said that taxes are necessary, but the extent of the current taxes is unfair to the people.

### SEPTEMBER

-- A delegation led by Leader of the Opposition Cora Richardson Hodge went to London to attend the 6th UK Overseas Territories Forum on Good Governance and Oversight of Public Finance.

-- The St James School of Medicine in Anguilla closed after 15 years of operation. The school had two campuses, one in Anguilla and one in St Vincent and the Grenadines, which are now to be consolidated into one campus in St Vincent.

-- On September 10, Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster was awarded the title of Honorary Professor by the Global Humanistic University (GHU) at a ceremony attended by university representatives, cabinet members, family, and friends. The GHU is a private provider of part-time online study programmes with its main offices in Anguilla and Curacao. Its vision is to provide access to innovative, research-based teaching and learning to all who can benefit.

### OCTOBER

-- Minister of Social Development and Education, Dee-Ann Kentish Rogers, attended a Regional Symposium and Policy Dialogue on Transforming Education. It was held in the Cayman Islands under the theme "Understanding, Leveraging, and Unlocking Our Full Potential." The event offered thought-provoking discussions and expert presentations to equip stakeholders with tools to drive meaning-

ful change in the Caribbean education sector.

-- The fuel surcharge was reduced by ANGLEC from 0.60 kWh to 0.42 per kWh, following a gradual decline in the cost of fuel worldwide.

-- In the Conde Nast Traveler Readers' Choice Awards, Anguilla was voted the number two island in the Caribbean and Atlantic. The results were published in the November issue of the magazine. Anguilla's hotels also featured prominently in the list of Top 40 Resorts in the Caribbean. Zemi Beach House was number six on the list, with Cap Juluca, a Belmond Hotel, at number 11, and Malliouhana at number 33.

-- The Royal Anguilla Police Force Marine Unit was re-established to safeguard Anguilla's territorial waters. The unit plays a critical role in the island's overall security and well-being.

-- On Tuesday, October 15, the government of Anguilla signed a partnership with Identity Digital, a company that is a leader in connecting the online world with domain names and related technologies. The partnership is expected to enhance the sustainability, resilience, and security of the .ai domain. The agreement was signed by CEO of Identity Digital, Akram Atallah, and Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster.

-- Four young persons, aged between 16 and 20 (three females and one male), were injured in a shooting incident at the Lounge and Sports Bar in West End.

### NOVEMBER

-- UK Minister for the Overseas Territories, Stephen Doughty, paid a two-day visit to Anguilla. He visited many of the post-Irma UK-funded projects and met with elected members of

the government and opposition. He opened the new Emergency Centre control room and announced that the UK government would supply Anguilla with two new ambulances.

-- Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster opened the new session of parliament with an address at the House of Assembly. He listed the legislative plans for the government, including the Child Justice Act, Labour Relations Act, and Prison Regulations. He also highlighted priority areas for his government, including boosting economic growth, supporting young people, investing in specialty health care services, and investing in port development, hospital development, the water network, and roads.

-- On Wednesday, November 13, the Department of Agriculture opened a hatchery. This initiative is part of the government's ongoing commitment to enhancing local agriculture and promoting sustainable farming practices. The aim is to support poultry farmers in expanding their operations, increasing local poultry supplies, and strengthening overall food security.

-- Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster, accompanied by Minister of Home Affairs Kenneth Hodge and Minister of Social Development and Education Dee-Ann Kentish Rogers, attended the Joint Ministerial Council (JMC) meetings in London. Webster described the meetings as beneficial for Anguilla. A communiqué issued following the JMC highlighted the following points: the UK Government's five principles to guide the UK's relationship with the elected Governments of the Overseas Territories; the reaffirmation that the Overseas Territories are vital members of the UK global British family; the recognition of the Overseas Territories' stewardship of internationally important and unique environments and ecosystems; the acknowledgement that economic growth is key to building prosperity and wellbeing for the peoples of the UK and Overseas Territories; and the commitment of the UK to improving corporate transparency by completing plans to implement Accessible Registers of Beneficial Ownership.

-- The Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) investigated a shooting incident at Island Harbour on Friday, November 22, at 12:10 p.m. Several young men were at a private



Miss Anguilla with prize car



Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster



Newly built Landsome Bowl Cultural Centre

residence when a white Suzuki Swift approached the location. Persons wearing masks and dark clothing, armed with firearms, exited the vehicle, and discharged multiple rounds in the direction of the young men.

### DECEMBER

-- As of December 1, 2024, any person found in possession of 10 grams or less of marijuana will no longer be criminally prosecuted. Decriminalisation is not a legal term; it simply refers to the removal or non-enforcement of the criminal sanctions that currently exist for the possession of cannabis. If a person has possession of up to 10 grams, they will not be arrested, charged, taken to court, or receive a criminal record. The cultivation of up to four plants is also allowed under the new regulations.

-- The Government of Anguilla announced the donation of two state-of-the-art ambulances from the Government of Bermuda. This is seen as an important step in boosting the island's healthcare capabilities and highlights the value of partnerships in the Overseas

Territories.

-- Premier Ellis Lorenzo Webster presented the budget for 2025 on Monday, December 9, at the Atlin Naraldo Harrigan Parliamentary Building. It was under the theme, "Building the Anguillian Dream; Progress for Today, Hope for Generations." The budget totalled EC\$546,444,370, of which EC\$355,444,370 is recurrent expenditure and EC\$191 million is capital expenditure. It promises investments in education, healthcare, and economic growth to ensure inclusivity and resilience.

-- Officers from the Royal Anguilla Police Force, Customs, and Immigration departments successfully completed an intense SEA-COP training programme from December 2-9. It was facilitated by Alexander Kellman, Deputy Regional Coordinator Caribbean, and Jason Kelshall, Regional Coordinator Caribbean. The topics included an introduction to Maritime Intelligence, an introduction to Analysis, Maritime Risk Analysis, Maritime Trafficking Trends, and Corruption.



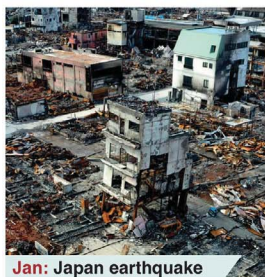
Leader of the Opposition  
Cora Richardson Hodge



Commissioner of Police,  
Robert Clark



# 2024: Weather and wars define challenging year



Jan: Japan earthquake



Apr: North American eclipse



Jul: Trump's assassination attempt



Jan: Abdication



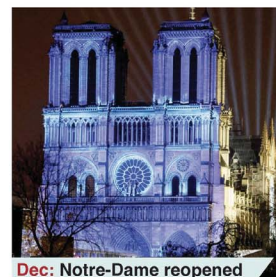
Mar: Bridge collapse



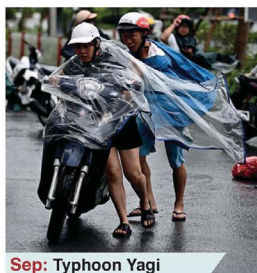
Aug: Big diamond



Sep: Lebanon bombed



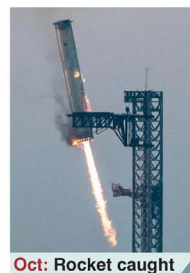
Dec: Notre-Dame reopened



Sep: Typhoon Yagi



Oct: Spanish floods



Oct: Rocket caught



Dec: Assad ousted

**JAN 1** A 7.6 magnitude earthquake hits Japan on New Year's Day, claiming at least 462 lives

**14** Queen Margrethe II abdicates the throne of Denmark. She is succeeded by her elder son, who becomes King Frederik X

**14** Former prime minister of Pakistan Imran Khan is sentenced to 10 years in jail for leaking state secrets, 14 years for corruption, and seven years for illegal marriage

**FEB 4** Wildfires sweep through Valparaíso region of Chile, killing more than 130 people and burning down thousands of homes

**4** Taylor Swift becomes the first performer to win the Grammy Awards for album of the year four times



**16** Aleksei Navalny, Russia's most outspoken Putin critic, dies at age 47 while in prison



**MAR 7** Sweden formally joins NATO, becoming the organisation's 32nd member

**17** Russian President Vladimir Putin secures his fifth term in office in a tightly controlled election

**26** A container ship collides with the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, causing it to collapse. The crash also kills six people

**APR 8** Tens of millions of people across parts of Mexico, the U.S., and Canada watch a total eclipse of the sun

**13** Iran launches missiles against Israel in retaliation for an Israeli airstrike on the Iranian consulate in Damascus – first time the two regional powers have come into a direct military confrontation



**17** Scientists identify the largest known marine reptile. The creature, named Ichthyotitan, was longer than two buses and lived around 202 million years ago

**MAY 7** Israel starts offensive in city of Rafah, where more than half of the population of the Gaza Strip is sheltering from the Israel-Hamas War

**29** The ANC party fails to win a majority of the vote for the first time in South Africa's democratic history

**30** Donald Trump becomes first former U.S. president to be convicted of a crime after being found guilty of falsifying records over hush money payments to a porn actress

**JUN 1** China's Chang'e 6 spacecraft collects the first-ever soil and rock samples from the far side of the moon



**2** Claudia Sheinbaum is elected as the first female president of Mexico

**24** WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is released from prison in UK and flies home to Australia as part of a U.S. plea bargain

**JUL 1** The U.S. Supreme Court rules that presidents have absolute immunity from criminal prosecution for acts which fall within their "core constitutional authority"

**2** Hurricane Beryl becomes the earliest-forming Category 5 Atlantic hurricane on record

**13** Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump survives an assassination attempt after a gunman opens fire during a rally in Pennsylvania. Trump suffers a wound to his ear

**21** Incumbent U.S. President Joe Biden ends his presidential campaign, endorsing Vice President Kamala Harris as the Democratic nominee

**AUG 7** Sheikh Hasina, five-term prime minister of Bangladesh, resigns and flees to India amid mass protests against her government

**16** Paetongtarn Shinawatra becomes Thailand's youngest prime minister after her predecessor, Srettha Thavisin, is dismissed by the Constitutional Court



**22** The largest diamond found in more than a century is unearthed at a mine in Botswana

**SEP 9** Super Typhoon Yagi leaves more than 600 people dead as it sweeps across southern China, the Philippines, Vietnam and Myanmar

**23** The deadliest day of the Hezbollah-Israel conflict in almost 20 years, with more than 550 people killed by Israeli airstrikes in Lebanon

**26** Hurricane Helene makes landfall in Florida, causing widespread destruction and more than 230 deaths



**27** Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah leader for more than 30 years and one of the most influential figures in the Middle East, is assassinated in an Israeli airstrike in Beirut



**OCT 13** SpaceX catches the first-stage booster of its Starship megarocket with a pair of robotic arms, a world first in the company's quest for rapid reusability

**16** Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar is killed in Gaza during a firefight with Israel Defence Forces. Sinwar was a successor to former Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh, who was assassinated in Tehran in July

**17** Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accuses North Korea of deploying troops to Ukraine to fight alongside Russian forces

**29** Spain suffers its worst flooding disaster in decades, with around 230 people dead after torrential rain hits the region of Valencia

**NOV 5** Donald Trump wins the U.S. presidential election, becoming the first convicted felon to be elected to the office and the second president to win a second non-consecutive term

**19** The world marks 1,000 days since Russia's invasion of Ukraine

**21** The International Criminal Court issues an arrest warrant for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, over war crimes in Gaza



**27** Israel and Lebanon agree a 60-day ceasefire brokered by the U.S. and France to halt the hostilities between Hezbollah and Israel

**DEC 3** President Yoon Suk Yeol declares martial law

in South Korea but the move is quickly blocked by the National Assembly. An impeachment review is underway



**7** Paris's Notre-Dame cathedral is officially reopened after five years of extensive restoration work following a devastating fire

**8** Syrian rebel forces seize control of Damascus following a lightning offensive, ending 50 years of iron rule by the Assad family

**14** Several hundred people are feared dead after the most powerful cyclone in nearly a century hits the French Indian Ocean archipelago of Mayotte



# Inflation, elections and war dominated 2024

**LONDON--Inflation dropped in most economies around the world in 2024, but voters didn't care.**

Angered by the hefty ramp-up in prices for everything from eggs to energy over the past few years, they punished incumbent parties at almost every opportunity. The pain of inflation lingers, and ruling parties took the blame in election after election.

In the United States, higher costs helped Donald Trump win a second term as president four years after he was voted out of the White House and then falsely claimed election fraud. His supporters failed in their bid to overturn Trump's defeat by storming the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. This year, they made their voices heard at the ballot box, ushering in a new American leadership likely to test democratic institutions at home and relations abroad.

The inflation-driven anti-incumbent sentiment also ushered in new governments in Britain and

Botswana, Portugal and Panama. South Korean voters put the opposition into power in its parliament, a check on President Yoon Suk Yeol. In early December, the president imposed martial law, a move the National Assembly quickly reversed. Elections also shook up France and Germany, and Japan and India.

One place there was no change: Russia, where Vladimir Putin was re-elected president with 88% of the vote, a record in post-Soviet Russia.

Moscow continued to prosecute its war against Ukraine, grinding out notable territorial gains. The big question is what impact Trump's return to the White House will have on the conflict. He has promised to end the war in a day. Many in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe fear that will mean siding with Putin and freezing the status quo.

In the Middle East, Israel continued its war against Gaza and extended it to Lebanon, where it left Iran-backed Hezbollah damaged and in disarray. In Syria, a

well-coordinated collection of rebel groups toppled Bashar al-Assad and now seeks to run the country.

In business, companies around the world grappled



U.S. President-elect Donald Trump and Elon Musk watch the launch of the sixth test flight of the SpaceX Starship rocket in Brownsville, Texas, U.S., November 19, 2024.



A cat named "Skye" looks on during the 2024 U.S. presidential election on Election Day in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, U.S., November 5, 2024.



Servicemen of 110th Brigade of the Territorial Defence Forces fire a D-30 howitzer towards Russian troops at a position in a front line, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine December 4, 2024.

with how to adapt to artificial intelligence. The dominance of tech companies for investors can be summed up in this simple fact: seven tech firms — the so-called

Magnificent Seven — now account for more than one-third of the S&P 500's market cap.

Elon Musk, who runs one of those companies, Tesla,

is an adviser and financial backer to President-elect Trump. Looking ahead, that combination of tech bro mojo and political power could well define 2025.



A woman pays with a twenty Euro bank note at the checkout in a supermarket in Chanverrie, France, October 16, 2024.



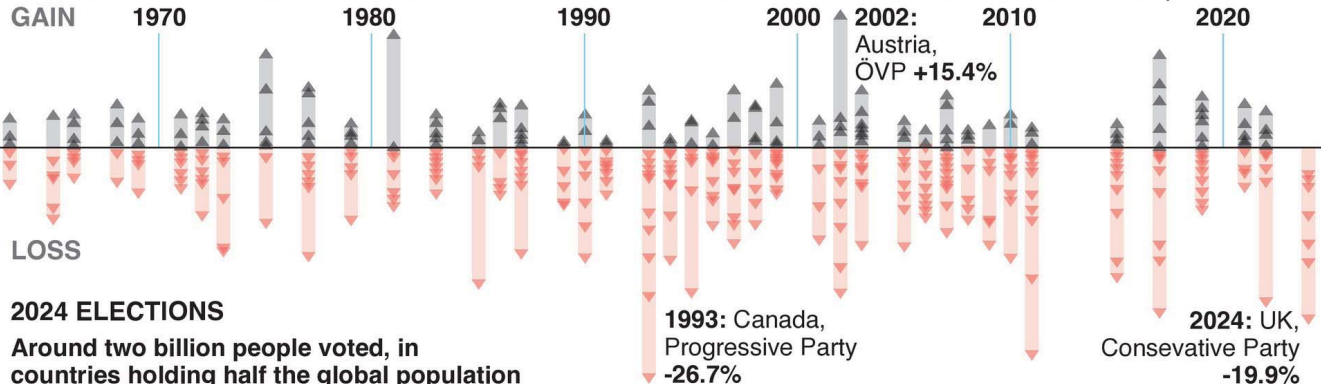
Russian incumbent President Vladimir Putin, who was declared winner of the presidential election by the country's electoral commission, is seen on a screen as he attends a rally, which marks the 10th anniversary of Russia's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine, in Red Square in central Moscow, Russia, March 18, 2024.



# 2024: Bad year for election incumbents

Governments from both left and right have struggled with hostile economic and geopolitical conditions, with every one facing election in a developed country this year losing vote share for the first time

## CHANGE IN VOTE SHARE OF GOVERNING PARTY



## 2024 ELECTIONS

Around two billion people voted, in countries holding half the global population

### KEY Change of power

**JAN** Bhutan  
♦ Bangladesh  
Taiwan  
♦ Comoros  
Tuvalu  
Finland

### Incumbent lost vote share

**FEB** El Salvador  
♦ Azerbaijan  
♦ Pakistan  
Indonesia  
♦ Belarus  
♦ Cambodia

### Disputed as neither free nor fair

**MAR** ♦ Iran  
Portugal  
♦ Russia  
Slovakia  
Senegal

**APR** Kuwait  
South Korea  
Croatia  
Solomon Islands  
India  
Maldives  
Togo

**United States:** Former President **Donald Trump** wins decisive victory over incumbent Vice President **Kamala Harris** despite criminal convictions

**Russia:** President **Vladimir Putin** alleged to have interfered in elections worldwide



**Mexico:** **Claudia Sheinbaum** wins historic landslide to become first female president

**Venezuela:** **Nicolás Maduro** returns to power despite observers declaring victory to opposition

**European Parliament:** Big gains for far-right

**South Africa:** ANC loses parliamentary majority held since fall of apartheid in 1994



**India:** Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** unexpectedly loses majority, forced to form coalition

**Bangladesh:** Prime Minister **Sheikh Hasina** forced to flee after student protests

**MAY** North Macedonia  
Panama  
♦ Chad  
Dominican Republic  
Lithuania (President)  
♦ Madagascar  
South Africa

**JUN** Iceland (President)  
Mexico  
Belgium  
Bulgaria  
Mauritania  
Mongolia

**JUL** United Kingdom  
Iran (President)  
France  
♦ Rwanda  
♦ Venezuela  
♦ Syria

**AUG** Kiribati

**SEP** ♦ Algeria  
Jordan  
Sri Lanka  
Austria  
Czechia

**OCT** ♦ Tunisia  
Lithuania  
♦ Mozambique  
Moldova (alleged Russian interference)  
♦ Georgia (alleged Russian interference)  
Japan  
Uruguay  
♦ Uzbekistan  
Botswana

**NOV** United States  
Palau  
♦ Romania (annulled due to alleged Russian interference)  
♦ Namibia  
Ireland  
Mauritius  
Iceland

**DEC** Ghana  
Guinea-Bissau  
Guinea



# When the world voted: the year of elections in photos

**LONDON--In 2024, people voted in countries that were home to almost half the world's population. In desert villages and at huge rallies on five continents, Reuters photographers were there to capture the hope and the euphoria, the frustration and the rage.**

The votes took place at a time of global unrest, with conflict in Ukraine and the Middle East, and cost-of-living crises in many countries after the COVID-19 pandemic rippled out into supply chain shortages and

high inflation.

From India to Ireland, the UK to Uruguay, Senegal to South Africa, voters went out to do their civic duty. They lined up in rain or scorching sunshine, some draping themselves in national flags or wearing shirts or even masks bearing the face of their preferred candidate.

Many of the elections were disputed and some sparked angry protests from those who felt their voice had not been recognized. Observers said the elections in Mozambique, for example, were not free

and fair. The opposition in Venezuela produced a vote tally that differed from the official one. In Algeria, the incumbent won 95% of the vote and in Indonesia protesters clashed with police over proposed changes to election law.

Nationalistic ideologies gained ground in elections in France, Romania, and Georgia, where the president called for protests after parliamentary elections that were marred by allegations of vote-rigging.

In Russia - where opponents of President Vladimir Putin have been cen-



Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro celebrates after the presidential election in Caracas, Venezuela July 29, 2024.



Republican presidential nominee and former U.S. President Donald Trump takes the stage on Day 4 of the Republican National Convention (RNC), at the Fiserv Forum in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, U.S., July 18, 2024.



Supporters of Ghana's ruling New Patriotic Party (NPP) embark on a rally ahead of the December 7 polls in Accra, Ghana December 1, 2024.



A man goes behind a voting booth reading "The vote is free and secret" at a polling station on the day of the general elections, in the town of Norogachi, in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, June 2, 2024.



Iranian voters participate in a snap presidential election to choose a successor to Ebrahim Raisi following his death in a helicopter crash, at the Iranian embassy, in Baghdad, Iraq June 28, 2024.



Voters fill in ballots at a polling station during parliamentary elections in the village of Atskuri in the region of Kakheti, Georgia October 26, 2024.



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) supporters celebrate outside BJP headquarters, on the day of the general election results, in New Delhi, India, June 4, 2024.



Cossacks vote at a polling station on the second day of a three-day long presidential election in the settlement of Krasny Kolos in Rostov Region, Russia March 16, 2024.

sored and imprisoned - Putin won a landslide vote, further cementing his power.

Elsewhere, incumbents fell as voters punished them for painful price rises. Britain's Conservatives and Japan's Liberal Democrats received a drubbing. In the United States, Republican Donald Trump beat the Democratic candidate Kamala Harris to return to the helm of the world's biggest economy.

Over the border, Mexicans voted in Claudia

Sheinbaum, the first woman ever to run the country.

In India, a multi-stage election featured over 1 million polling stations, from remote corners of the Himalayas to far-flung forests deep in Nagaland. Narendra Modi won a third term as prime minister but saw his majority shrink. It was the largest election in history.



# 2024: The year in science

## BANANA-SHAPED GALAXIES

**JANUARY:** Astrophysicists report that newborn galaxies in the very early universe – about 500 million years after the Big Bang – were “banana-shaped.” First spotted by the *Hubble Space Telescope*, the powerful *James Webb Space Telescope* has examined 4,000 newborn galaxies, seeing them too



## SPACEX CATCHES BOOSTER

**OCTOBER:** For the first time *SpaceX* catches its *Starship* super heavy first-stage booster as it returns to the launch-pad in Texas

*SpaceX* plans to use 121-metre rocket – world’s biggest – to send people back to Moon

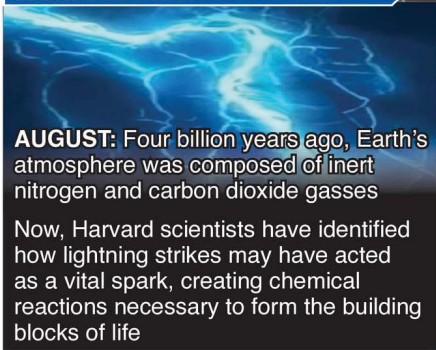
Human to scale



## SPARK OF LIFE

**AUGUST:** Four billion years ago, Earth’s atmosphere was composed of inert nitrogen and carbon dioxide gasses

Now, Harvard scientists have identified how lightning strikes may have acted as a vital spark, creating chemical reactions necessary to form the building blocks of life



## RECHARGEABLE CALCIUM BATTERY

**APRIL:** A battery based on calcium is potential alternative to lithium – calcium being 2,000 times more abundant on Earth



**Coin-cell battery** Powering blue light-emitting diode bulb relies on reaction between calcium and chlorine to form calcium chloride (white powder)

**Battery charges and discharges 700 times at room temperature**

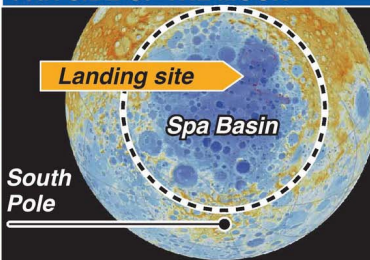
## FACTORY OF THE FUTURE



**APRIL:** A giant 3D printer has been unveiled by the University of Maine. The university says it has beaten its own record for world’s largest polymer 3D printer – the new unit is four times bigger than its previous machine

Dubbed **Factory of the Future 1.0**, the device can use thermoplastic polymers to print objects as large as 29m long by 9.8m wide and 5.5m high, at rate of 230kg per hour

## FAR SIDE OF THE MOON

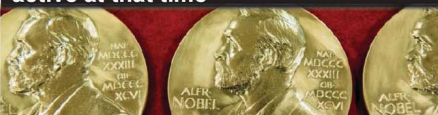


**MAY:** China launches its *Chang’e-6* probe, a robotic sample-return mission to Moon’s far side



**JUN:** Probe collects 1.9kg of lunar soil

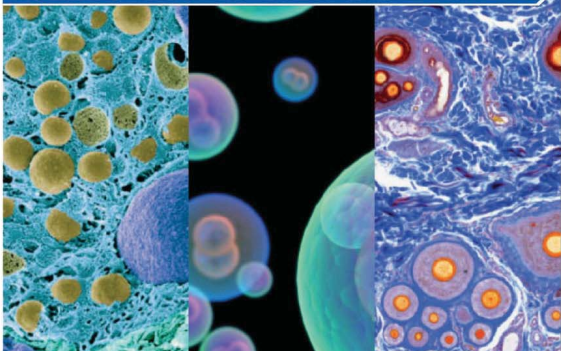
**NOV:** Volcanic rock contained in sample dates back 2.8 billion years, suggesting landing site was volcanically active at that time



**DECEMBER:** Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, Physiology, Literature and economic science are presented in Sweden

The Nobel Peace Prize ceremony will be held in Norway

## HUMAN CELL ATLAS TAKES SHAPE



**NOVEMBER:** Researchers have created an early map of the Human Cell Atlas (HCA) of the human body’s estimated 37.2 trillion cells

**HCA scientists plotted cells in mouth, stomach, intestines and those that guide how bones and joints develop to help fight diseases**

Starship 71-metre booster

© GRAPHIC NEWS



# THE WORLD UNDER WATER

**LONDON--In 2024, it often felt like it was flooding somewhere in the world.**

The floods took many forms: coastal homes were inundated as rising seas were pushed ashore by strong storms, torrential amounts of rain fell on an increasingly paved-over world, quickly melting snowpack caused rivers to burst their banks.

Whether from lifeboats, makeshift workstations dragged through mud, helicopters, or with drones, Reuters photographers covered flooding in more than 45 countries this year.

The floods took over 1,000 lives, displaced millions of people, and caused hundreds of billions of dollars

in damage. For many it will take years to recover. And much - flattened cars, contaminated store stock, mud-drenched belongings - will never be replaced.

People evacuated in boats, tubs and whatever they could lay their hands on. They rescued their pets, cleaned mud from their kitchens, and dried out books when the sun returned. Children played in the unexpected novelty of the water and the elderly wept for the houses they had built that had gone forever.

In the most severe cases — even before the waters had receded — scientists got to work on rapid analyses that asked to what extent climate change amplified a certain

storm or rainfall event.

In fifteen of the sixteen analyses that World Weather Attribution scientists undertook in 2024 that looked at extreme rainfall events — from Valencia in Spain to Asheville in North Carolina, and from Brazil to Kenya — they found that climate change made the rainfall heavier or more likely.

Scientists have long predicted that an increase in the global temperature would create an increase in precipitation — although not evenly distributed — because a warmer atmosphere holds more water vapor.

This year will be the hottest in the last 125,000 years, and the first to cross 1.5C (2.7F) since humans started burning coal, oil



People use a makeshift boat to move after the Congo River rises to its highest level, causing flooding in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo January 10, 2024.



A general view shows a mudslide caused by Hurricane John, in Acapulco, Mexico, September 26, 2024.



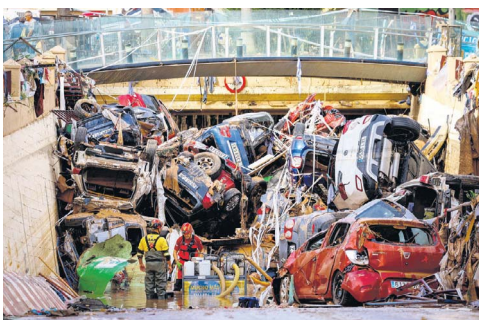
A drone view shows a damaged bridge following floods caused by Storm Bora, in Faliraki, on the island of Rhodes, Greece, December 2, 2024.



Saiful Islam cries after meeting his daughter Sadia Akter after four days as a severe flood hits the Lalpola area in Feni, Bangladesh, August 25, 2024.



A man is rescued by military firefighters after the floods in Canoas, at the Rio Grande do Sul state, Brazil, May 4, 2024.



Firefighters pump out the floodwater out of a tunnel where vehicles are piled up, after heavy rains in Alfafar, in Valencia, Spain, November 1, 2024.



A drone view shows a man working on a car, partially submerged by floods caused by heavy rains, as people stand nearby, in Avellaneda, in the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina, March 12, 2024.

and gas to power economies. Already the planet has warmed about 1.3C above the pre-industrial average, corresponding to about a 10% increase in expected precipitation.

With global CO2 emissions hitting a record high in 2024, the compounding effects from this excess carbon will be affecting our weather for decades to come.

Climate change is also causing sea levels to rise, which makes some coastal flooding more likely or se-

vere. Scientists say the extent of a flood's damage to lives and property is largely attributed to other factors, including how much cement is in the environment, the topography or saturation of the ground, and if people were adequately warned ahead.

As irregular heavy rainfall becomes more common, experts say countries will need to invest in adapting the places people live, and how they notify their populations about risk.



A view of damaged houses after the deadly floods following heavy rainfall, along the bank of Kalati River, in Bhumidanda village of Panauti municipality, in Kavre, Nepal October 1, 2024.



# Journalists killed or missing in 2024

The latest CPJ data shows that 91 journalists and media workers were killed in 2024, down from 98 the previous year, with the Israel-Gaza war responsible for more than half of fatalities

## MAJOR DANGER ZONES



## Israel-Gaza war

Dead: 59  
Missing: 2

## Russia

Dead: 1  
Missing: 7

## Lebanon

Dead: 3  
Missing: 1

## Syria

Dead: 1  
Missing: 8

## Iraq

Dead: 3  
Missing: 9

## Libya

Missing: 4

## Pakistan

Dead: 6

## Algeria

Missing: 3

## Bangladesh

Dead: 2

## Sudan

Dead: 5

## Dem. Rep of Congo

Missing: 2

## Rwanda

Missing: 2

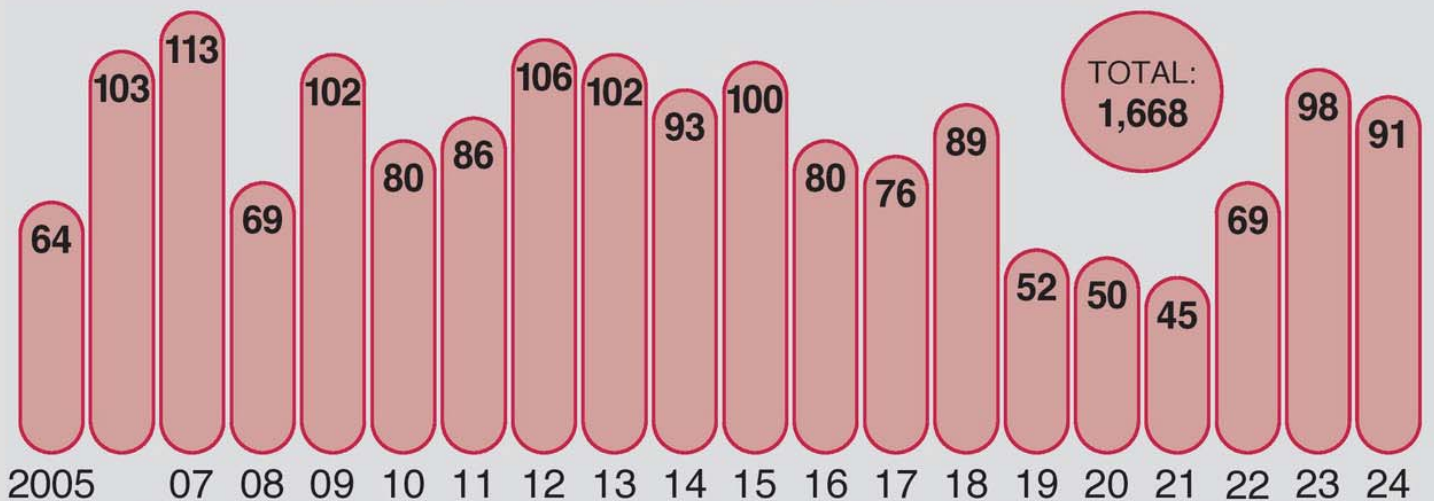
## Myanmar

Dead: 3

## Mexico

Dead: 4  
Missing: 16

## JOURNALISTS AND MEDIA WORKERS KILLED SINCE 2005



Sources: Committee to Protect Journalists

Data as of Dec 9, 2024

© GRAPHIC NEWS



# WAR ESCALATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



A Palestinian woman reacts as she waits to receive aid from an UNRWA distribution center which was hit in an Israeli strike, as the conflict between Israel and Hamas continues, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip March 13, 2024.



Ultra Orthodox Jews hang around apparent remains of a ballistic missile before it has been evacuated from the location it was found lying in the desert, following a massive missile and drone attack by Iran on Israel, near the southern city of Arad, Israel April 26, 2024.



Smoke and flames rise in Beirut's southern suburbs, after Israeli air strikes, amid ongoing hostilities between Hezbollah and Israeli forces, as seen from Sin El Fil, Lebanon, October 6, 2024.



A person sits as supporters and families of hostages, who were kidnapped during the deadly October 7 attack by Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, rally demanding release of hostages as part of a deal being advanced by U.S. President Joe Biden, at Dizengoff square in Tel Aviv, Israel June 5, 2024.

**LONDON--In 2024, conflict escalated in the Middle East.**

Long-simmering violence in the region was stoked in October 2023 when gunmen led by Palestinian militant group Hamas stormed over the border into Israel, killing some 1,200 people and taking over 250 hostages, according to Israeli tallies.

Israel's retaliation was swift and hard, and continued throughout this year. More than 44,000 Palestinians had been killed in Gaza as of early December 2024, according to health authorities in the Hamas-run enclave, as Israeli forces sought to wipe out Hamas and rescue the hostages.

Much of Gaza has been laid to waste in the conflict, with some two-thirds of its buildings damaged or destroyed. Most of the strip's 2.3 million people have been made homeless, sheltering in places like the Jabalia refugee camp. Those camps themselves came under fire as Israel said it was going after militants using the places as shields, an accusation Hamas denies.

Many of Gaza's inhabitants, including its children, faced supply shortages and hunger.

As the death toll rose in Gaza, violence also surged in the occupied West Bank, while at the Israel-Lebanon border Hezbollah - Lebanese militants allied with Hamas and, like them, backed by Iran - exchanged fire with Israeli troops.

In October, Israel ratcheted up its attacks on Hezbollah with intensified strikes on southern Lebanon and in parts of the capital Beirut. Lebanon's government said more than

2,600 people were killed and villages near the border emptied.

A string of assassinations of militant leaders hurt Hezbollah and Hamas and were celebrated as triumphs by Israel, although domestically the government also faced protests for its failure to secure the return of all the hostages. On a "Day of Disruption" in May, demonstrators held up Israeli flags and photos of those still being held hostage in Gaza.

Angered at the attacks on Hezbollah, Iran itself engaged in tit-for-tat strikes with Israel, raising fears of a wider war that could draw in the Israel-allied United States. In late November, a ceasefire was agreed between Israel and Hezbollah - a rare ray of hope.

Taking advantage of a weakened Hezbollah, which like Iran was on the back foot after conflict with Israel, Syrian rebels launched a wide offensive against the army of President Bashar al-Assad. In little more than a week in December, the five-decade rule of the Assad family came to an end as the rebels swept through the country.

What 2025 will bring for Syrians, Lebanese, Palestinians, Israelis and others who live in the war-torn region remains to be seen.

Twins Wesam and Naeem Abu Anza will never get to find out, or to know peace. Born in late 2023 in Gaza after hostilities broke out, the infant boy and girl were buried in March after being killed in what Gaza health authorities said was an Israeli airstrike in Rafah.

"My heart is gone," wept their mother Abu Anza, whose husband was also killed.



A man walks on a poster of Bashar al-Assad as a sanitation worker removes it from the street downtown, after Syrian rebels announced that they have ousted Syria's Bashar al-Assad, in Damascus, Syria December 10, 2024.



Israeli soldiers operate in what the military described as a Hamas command tunnel running partly under UNRWA headquarters, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, in the Gaza Strip, February 8, 2024.



People work to recover the dead body of a Palestinian boy from the rubble of a house hit in an Israeli strike, amid the Israel-Hamas conflict, in Gaza City October 16, 2024.

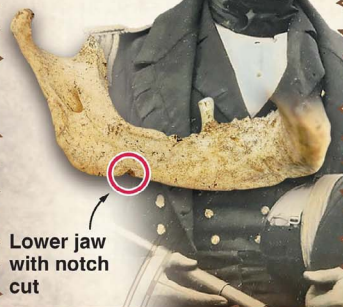


Palestinians wait to receive food during the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, as the conflict between Israel and Hamas continues, in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip March 13, 2024.



## Archaeological discoveries in 2024

**1 CANADA:** The British *Franklin Expedition* of 1845 ended in tragedy when the ships *HMS Erebus* and *HMS Terror* became trapped in pack ice. All **134** men on board died, but not before resorting to cannibalism. Now scientists have identified, from a jawbone with multiple cut marks, that one of the men eaten was none other than **Captain James Fitzjames** of the *Erebus*



**5 BRAZIL:** Researchers have documented more than **50** petroglyphs in *Dinosaur Valley* – famed for its *Cretaceous* period dinosaur footprints. The human markings, dating back 3,000-9,000 years, show that prehistoric people were aware of the fossilised tracks and that they meant something to them



**6 ITALY:** A very rare and ornate schola tomb was discovered in *Pompeii*, likely commemorating a high-ranking soldier who served in *Spain* under Roman emperor *Augustus* (27 BC-AD 14). An inscription (*below*) shows it was dedicated to a man named **Numerius Agrestinus Equitius Pulcher**



**2 GUATEMALA:** Archaeologists discovered a collapsed burial chamber beneath the floor of a small pyramid in the ancient city of *Chochkitam*. Among the items recovered were a partial skeleton belonging to a *Mayan* ruler and a jade mosaic mask (*right*) with mother-of-pearl eyes



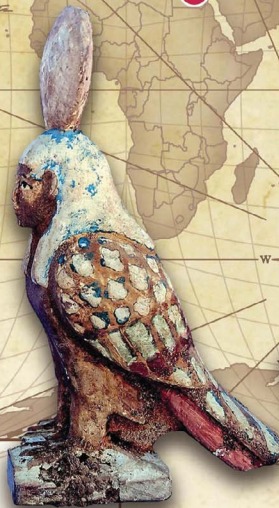
**3 PANAMA:** Unearthing of the 1,250-year-old *El Caño necropolis* on the banks of the *Rio Grande*, led to the remains of a man, thought to be *Coclé*, draped in gold ornaments and buried face down alongside numerous gold figurines and eight gold breastplates (*right*)



**4 PERU:** At *Pañamarca* – a once vast cultural centre for the *Moche* people around AD 350-850 – archaeologists uncovered the country's first evidence of a throne room designed for a Moche queen, including an earthen royal seat and vivid murals depicting a powerful woman



**7 EGYPT:** On the banks of the *Nile* near the thriving ancient frontier city of *Aswan*, Egyptologists discovered a huge tomb containing the remains of **46** men, women, and children dating from the second century BC, along with statuettes (*above*) and painted mummy cases



**8 RUSSIA:** Excavation of a burial mound in Siberia (*right*) shows that *Scythians* – a horse-centred culture from 900-200 BC – occupied lands further east than previously believed. The find includes the remains of sacrificed horses and riders, and artefacts depicting animals



**9 AUSTRALIA:** Researchers have concluded that a pair of seemingly unremarkable sticks (*below*) unearthed in *Cloggs Cave*, were used more than 10,000 years ago to cast spells. How they were arranged on small hearths matches practices used today, making it the only known *Ice Age* ritual to have survived to the modern era



Source: Archaeology Magazine. Pictures: 1) Sotheby's, A. Keenleyside; 2) Rubén Salgado Escudero; 3) Julia Mayo (Fundación El Caño); 4) Lisa Trever (Columbia University); 5) Pedro Arcanjo; 6) Soprintendenza Archeologica di Pompei; 7) Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities; 8) Trevor Wallace; 9) Steve Morton (Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation)

© GRAPHIC NEWS



## 2024 SPORTING MOMENTS TO REMEMBER

**PARIS**—In a year marked by sporting brilliance, champions old and new captivated audiences and pushed the limits of human endurance. Reuters photographers were on hand to capture some of the most memorable moments.

The stand-out event of the year was the Summer Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris from July to September, where the City of Love's iconic landmarks provided a spectacular backdrop for the sport.

French swimmer Léon Marchand, U.S. gymnast Simone Biles, and Dutch runner Sifan Hassan were some of the stars whose remarkable performances will be remembered for years to come, while a gender eligibility dispute involving boxers Imane Khelif and Lin Yu-ting sparked some controversy at the quadrennial event.

The fastest man on Earth was American Noah Lyles, edging out his competitors in the closest-ever Olympics 100 metres final by five thousandths of a second. The world's best surfers rode their waves to glory in Tahiti, some 16,000 km (10,000 miles) from Paris.

From Reuters, 67 photographers were on Olympics duty - the agency's most diverse team ever assembled for a major event, with a

near 50-50 gender split and photographers from five continents.

The ever-popular sport of soccer still managed to capture headlines over a busy summer. Spain triumphed at Euro 2024, beating England in the final, and Lionel Messi's Argentina made history as they won a record 16th Copa America title. Manchester City won their fourth straight Premier League title and Liverpool fans said a sad farewell to their popular manager Jürgen Klopp.

In tennis, one of the sport's all-time greats, Spain's Rafael Nadal, bid an emotional farewell, while Italy's Jannik Sinner experienced a year of highs and lows, winning two Grand Slam titles but also grappling with the fallout from a failed doping test. He was cleared of wrongdoing.

In the world of motorsport, Charles Leclerc celebrated a boyhood dream by winning Formula One's showcase Monaco Grand Prix, while Max Verstappen went on to win a fourth straight Formula One championship.

Francesco Bagnaia was unable to defend his MotoGP crown and finished second-best in a thrilling battle with Jorge Martin.



Argentina's Lionel Messi lifts the trophy as he celebrates with teammates after winning Copa America 2024 by beating Colombia in the final at Hard Rock Stadium, Miami, Florida, United States on July 15, 2024.



Simone Biles of United States reacts after her performance in the Women's Artistic Gymnastics Vault Final at the Bercy Arena, during the 2024 Olympics in Paris, France on August 03.

Paris Olympics launch with opening ceremony on Seine



## Sporting highlights of 2024

### January

**27-28 Jannik Sinner** wins maiden major at Australian Open. **Aryna Sabalenka** defends women's title without losing set

**28 France** beat Denmark to clinch fourth **EHF European Men's Handball Championship**

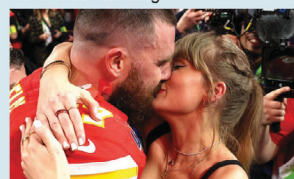
### Triple crown

**Tadej Pogačar**

### February

**10-11 Côte d'Ivoire** and **Qatar** win continental titles at **Africa Cup of Nations** and **AFC Asian Cup**

**11 Kansas City Chiefs** defend Super Bowl crown - most watched U.S. television event since 1969 moon landing



Taylor Swift's own love story with Chiefs' boyfriend Travis Kelce may have peaked interest

### March

**24 Swiss duo Marco Odermatt** and **Lara Gut-Behrami** claim Alpine Ski World Cup titles

### April

**14 U.S. golfer Scottie Scheffler** (left) wins second U.S. Masters, pulling away from chasing pack in sensational style

### May

**18 Oleksandr Usyk** of Ukraine powers to dramatic victory over British boxer **Tyson Fury**, to become first undisputed heavyweight champion in 24 years

### UEFA Euro 2024

**Lamine Yamal**

### Verstappen

### Nadal farewell

### Chepngetich

### Olympic hero

**Léon Marchand**

### August

**4 U.S. sprinter Noah Lyles** storms to Olympic 100m gold in thrilling photo finish. Arguably fastest race in history

**5 Pole vaulter Armand Duplantis** (left) sets new World Record to become double Olympic champion

### September

**8 China** tops table at **Summer Paralympics**, with 220 medals

**29 Tadej Pogačar** becomes third man to win cycling's "Triple Crown" of Tour de France, Giro d'Italia and world title in same year

### October

**13 Kenya's Ruth Chepngetich** obliterates women's world record at Chicago Marathon

**19 Team New Zealand** rout **INEOS Britannia** in **America's Cup**

**28 Spaniards Rodri** and **Aitana Bonmati** win **Ballons d'Or**

### November

**19 "King of Clay" Rafael Nadal** retires, ending illustrious career that heralded golden era in men's tennis

**24 Max Verstappen** stutters to fourth F1 title - **McLaren** later win Constructors' crown

### December

**16 UEFA Women's Euro 2025** draw pits reigning champions England against rivals Wales, France and Netherlands



# LOCAL SPORTS

## YEAR IN REVIEW

Twenty-twenty-four was an active year on St. Maarten. Athletes played everything from Baseball to Bocce. They sailed, they ran, they boxed. While others hit balls with either rackets or paddles.

A new sport even appeared on the island called the International Aqua Walking. Participants walk in waist deep water. To make the workout even more physical paddles can be used to work the arms.

The year Twenty-twenty-four ended with two St. Maarten athletes traveling to Budapest to compete in the World Aquatic Championships in December. Adaya Bourne and Nigel Fontenelle represented St. Maarten on the world stage. Both are St. Maarten swimming national record holders and both were able to improve their personal best times in the races in which they participated. They showed that hard work, sweat and perseverance pays off.

Nigel competed in the 50m butterfly with a time of 27.89 seconds and the 50m Freestyle with a time of 25.43 seconds. Adaya competed in the 200m breaststroke and completed the race in 3:04.58. She also competed in the 400m Freestyle with the time of 5:08.74.

### JANUARY

The Twenty-twenty-four sports calendar opened in January as the St. Maarten National Basketball Association (SXMNBA) hosted their 2024 Basketball Camp, at the St. Maarten Academy P.S.V.E. Gymnasium. The camp catered to boys and girls ages 9-19.

Coach Thomas Fabian, a distinguished figure in the basketball community, led the camp imparting valuable knowledge and fostering a positive learning environment for all attendees. Under Coach Fabian's guidance, the camp aimed to develop fundamental skills, teamwork, and sportsman-ship.

Sailors returned to the water January 9 as 11 boats, including 7 Diams and 4 Melges, competed in the Grant Thornton Keel-boat Season Championship. Hosted by the St.

Maarten Yacht Club, the Sunday race schedule included three races per class. In the CSA 1 fleet, Team Island Water World claimed the first place, Team Budget Marine sailed into second position. In the Diam 24 fleet, Cry Baby secured the top spot on the podium, followed by Buzz Race Team in second.

Also on January 9, the Little League returned to the diamond with both baseball and softball games for young athletes.

Sailing continued as the St. Maarten Yacht Club hosted the Grant Thornton Multi Class Regatta on January 20 and 21. This two-day event featured sailors in five classes: Optimist, RS Zest, ILCA, RS Quests and Sunfast 20.

The 5th Resolution Run was held January 26. Twenty-three teams of five participants each, transformed the streets of Philipsburg into a vibrant tapestry of health and wellness. "The event was not just a testament to physical endurance but a celebration of unity and a commitment to healthier lifestyles," said organizer Sandy Offringa.

### FEBRUARY

February 3 and 4 saw the International Aqua Walking Open on Anse Meunier Beach in Sainte-Anne Martinique. Nearly 200 competitors entered water walk with paddles. Local athletes Sarah Célestine and Nadia Noël-Plouhinec entered the 50 meters solo single paddle (25 metres round trip), essentially a speed event. The objective, for this first trip outside the territory, was to give visibility to St. Martin in an international competition.

The sixth edition of Caribbean Multi-hull Challenge featured more than 30 teams including two all women squads. Last year there was only one all female team, Fope. This year Team Island Water World, organized and skippered by Berit Bus, has joined the fleet and Team Fope returned on "Imagine". The idea of more females started by regatta co-founder and organizer Steve Burzon. Merlin won the

Diam 24 Class and Nemo took top honors in CSA 1.

The Second Annual Mixed Couples Friendship Paddle Tournament was held February 9 to 11. More than 33 co-ed teams represented a multitude of nationalities, including St. Maarten, St. Martin, Argentina, Netherlands, France, Guyana, Italy, Curacao, Cuba, Colombia, Venezuela, Puerto Rico, Suriname, United States and Belgium.

Big news arrived February 12 when the St. Maarten Baseball-Softball Federation received accreditation as a Softball Member of the World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) and WBSC Americas. This expands the federation's participation opportunities, allowing St. Maarten to engage in international softball tournaments alongside its existing baseball membership.

Jamal Cummins, from St. Maarten, was hired as a Junior College umpire for the states of Alabama and Tennessee. He will be umpiring for the Alabama Community College Conference (ACCC), the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) and American Athletic Conference (AAC). Jamal worked his way up through the ranks starting from Little League, Babe Ruth League, high school baseball in northern Alabama as well as numerous Perfect Game tournaments. He was also privileged to umpire the first Caribbean Baseball tournament in 2022 in St. Maarten.

Soccer continued at the Emilio Wilson's Sports Corner February 15 as Oualichi faced FC Soualiga and won 5-1. Matches were played every other Friday evening.

February 20 was day one of The St. Maarten Yacht Club's Hoedemaker Series. St. Barth Yacht Club took top honors in Optimist Class, with Thomas Magras in first place. Twenty-one participants competed. Guadeloupean Nardin Alvin from the club Jeunesse Athlétique Moulénne won Avenir Sportif Club's 10K race February 21 in a time of 33:37, followed by Avenir Sportif's Omarco Robinson in second place



Sarah Celestine and Nadia Noël-Plouhinec representing St. Martin at the first Aqua Walking International Open in Martinique February 3-4.



SXM Padel Club partnered with The Padel School and Sporfie to introduce the first-ever remote Padel level assessment service.

in 35:09.

As the month came to a close, athletes ranging in age from 6 to 13 from the King Yen Taekwondo School represented St. Maarten at the 31st Puerto Rico's International Taekwondo Championship called "Los Gallitos Olímpicos". The athletes competed against nearly 300 athletes from Puerto Rico, Santo Domingo, USA, St. Croix, US Virgin Islands and Columbia.

The month closed with the Rotary Club's annual table tennis competition at L.B. Scott Sports Audi-

torium. Riegnald Arrindell, Peter Carty, Glenton Pantophlet receive their trophies from Rotary Mid Isle President Claricia Yvette Hart.

### MARCH

The third month of 2024 opened with six local pool players securing places in the Dutch Caribbean 2024 Invitational. The team, comprised of Michael Parris, Josue Hyacinth, Brian Paulson, Brell Bennett, Denis Romney and Dillon Doodnath, represented St. Maarten against nearly 80 players from Aruba, Curacao, Netherlands, Bonaire, Guyana and Trinidad for \$10,000 in prize money.

The St. Maarten National Basketball Association (SXMNBA) launched the Basketball Academy, March 1, at the St. Maarten Academy Gymnasium. The program aims to nurture the basketball talents of young athletes from the ages of 9-19, providing structured training, mentorship, and a pathway to excellence on and off the court.

Test Your Skills Boxing was held at the L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium. Athletes from Bahamas, Curacao and Dominica as well as boxers from both sides of the Friendly Island competed.

continued on page 35



Black Belt Taekwondo Grand Master Theo Liu (left) was invited by the organization committee of the Global Traditional Taekwondo Federation (GTTF) to attend the summit in Korea where he earned his 9th Dan Black Belt.



## LOCAL SPORTS continued from page 34

The 44th Heineken Regatta set sail March 1. "Sea Breeze", winner of Bareboat 1, captured the Most Worthy Performance. More than 100 sailboats were entered in the regatta which was divided up into 13 classes.

CONCACAF hosted their Executive Mentorship Program (EMP) workshop with the Executive Committee of the St. Maarten Football Federation at the Divi Little Bay Resort. The CONCACAF Executive Mentorship Program objectives are to introduce best practices in governance to all 41 CONCACAF Executive Committees/Boards/Councils, and to expose Executive Committee members to leadership best practices.

Paris-based racer St. Martinier Wilson Sanon continued his successful cycling career in the higher echelons of the sport in France. He has made it into the D1 division, the first step to becoming a professional rider. His current team is Paris Cycliste Olympique (PCO), a club that he joined at the beginning of 2024.

The bleachers at the Carib Swim Team pool were filled with swim-

mers, coaches, school staff, parents and other supporters who came out to cheer on the school teams at the annual Inter Elementary and Secondary Swim Meets, that were held on March 10. The overall winning team was Learning Unlimited. CIA/Montessori was second, followed by St. Dominic Primary taking third.

Youth Soccer has returned to the pitch at Raoul Illidge Sports Complex mid March. The stadium had been closed so a new artificial grass pitch could be laid down.

The Avenir Sportif Club de Saint Martin (ASCSM) welcomed school children to the La Saint-Martin Girls race March 15. More than 135 starters from six primary schools and the island's three secondary schools showed up for the 2km race. The respective winners in their class categories were Kathia Boutin Corea (CM2), Nailah Boucaud (5eme), Akilaika Lake (CMI), and Lea Mercader (6eme).

Paul Soons, Jacob Streefkerk and Lionel Linturn took top honours in the St. Maarten Golf Association's Steve Mix Memorial Golf Tour-



French side Saint Martin (Les Tamarins) won the annual Concordia Cup Golf Tournament. The competition started in 2005 and based on golf's "Ryder Cup" pits the Dutch side St. Maarten Golf Association (SMGA) players against French side Saint Martin (Les Tamarins) players. Presently the Dutch side has won 10 and the French side 10.

nament March 20. Mix is an avid golfer and a past president of the SMGA. Twelve teams of 3 golfers each competed on the Mullet Bay Course. The winning score was 70 gross which came to a 61 net score.

St. Maarten's SXM BJJ athletes Megan Lockhon, Tristan Lista, Adeline Lista, Rylan Benjamin and Topper Daboul all remained undefeated taking gold at the St. Barths BJJ Open tournament on March 20. A total of 44 athletes from St. Maarten age 6-55 travelled to St. Barths to compete.

March 25, elections were held in the Government Building to appoint the new board for the Sint Maarten Sports Federation. Elected were President Naomi Korstanje, Secretary Maria Collazos- Cotton, Treasurer Saskia Jones and board members: Ryanne Bowers, Kimberley Reyes-Puello, Les Brown, and Alain Richardson.

## APRIL

The Gators defeated Vipors 14-1 in St. Maarten Little League Baseball April 2.

The following day, the Mini Triple Triathlon was held, sponsored by Sunset Beach Bar. It consisted of the swim, bike, run legs in three short back-to-back triathlons.

The RISC Takers Football Club

Under 9-years old Team placed second in the Centro Juve Football Tournament in Curacao April 9. Nael Messaoudi of the U9 squad was the top scorer in the division with six goals netted.

In mid April, two local ball players were invited to attend a training camp in Toulouse, France. The Camp is organized by the French Baseball National Team U18. This camp is designed to provide the best 40 French players to prepare for the European Championship in Germany, to be held from July 4 to 14, in Regensburg.

By April 16 the St. Maarten Little League NAGICO Divisional Tournament was in full swing with three divisions of play.

Fifteen sailors competed the Hope

Ross Series April 16 with 4 races in 2 different classes, the ILCA and Optimist. Eight sailors raced in the ILCA class, with Emelien Le Nomand, from Saint Martin Voile PourTous topping the group. Frits Bus, the SMYC commodore, was second and Massimo Lapierre from SMYC finished third. Seven sailors battled it out in the Optimist class. Nathan Sheppard finished in first place.

Some memorable cycling action took place on the Marigot waterfront at the very first Eunice Unique Bokit Grand Prix April 18.

April 21 St. Eustatius hosted a volleyball match at the Earl N Merkman Sports Auditorium. The competition brought together

continued on page 36



St. Maarten athletes Adaya Bourne and Nigel Fontenelle represented the Friendly Island on the world stage at the World Aquatic Championships in Budapest. The Island was so proud, billboards popped up all over announcing their qualification to participate.



Team Island Water World claimed the first win of the New Year in the St. Maarten Yacht Club's Grant Thornton Keel-boat Season Championship.



St. Maarten's own Denzel Richardson featured in the 2024 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Premier12, the third instalment of the baseball championship of Mexico. He delivered an impressive performance, boasting a .400 batting average with two home runs and three doubles. Richardson also led his team with the highest slugging percentage.



## LOCAL SPORTS continued from page 35

the islands of Statia, Saba and St Maarten. The games were played the best of the 3 sets. In the end the Statia girls proved too much for competitors and took top honours at the competition.

April 26, the 28th annual St. Maarten Open Golf Tournament found Kit Lee able, among a field of 61 competitors, to win the title of Tournament Champion. Lee ended on top on the first day, of the two-day tournament, with a score of 81 gross and did even better on the second day scoring 76, resulting in a 157 Low Gross score taking the Champion title. The prize for Tournament Overall Low Net was won by Hervé Thibaudau.

## MAY

A huge turnout of athletes of all ages and abilities hit the roads on May 6 in four distance categories for the BDO Half Marathon powered by International Liquors, Trading and Tobacco (ILTT) hosted by Country Club Port de Plaisance. The Half Marathon with 52 participants was won by Jeannot Gouin in 1:32:07. The first female finisher was Laura Grattepanche in 14th place in a time of 1:49:00.

Statia's first-ever bocce ball tournament was held on May 5 to help generate the competitive spirit in the young men who will represent the island in the Special Olympics Competition in the Netherlands.

Saba organized a netball tournament for primary school girls from Saba, St Eustatius and St Maarten May 12. Each island was given an opportunity to compete against one another, with the top two teams competing in the finals. For the final match of the day, Saba defeated St Eustatius 22-2.

Karibuni took first place in the annual Karibuni Sailing Grand Prix May 18. The regatta featured 22 participants, in 7 different teams, all competing in Diam 24 boats, known for their speed and agility.

The 7th edition of the Domino's Interscholar Sailing Championship took place on May 25. A total of 44 sailors in 30 boats, representing nine schools, took part in four races in the Simpson Bay Lagoon.

Learning Unlimited's (LU) Under 13 soccer team took on a mission

to raise over US\$2,000 to support the New Start Foundation home for children May 30. The New Start Foundation, operated by Sally Benjamin, currently houses 19 children, providing them with the essential family support and home environment they need.

## JUNE

The SXM Tri Academie's Gregory Pigeon coasted to victory in the Olympic Individual distance at the Sonesta Boardwalk Triathlon. Pigeon fended off close rival Gabriel Pertusot, also from SXM Tri Academie, to win with an over three-minute margin in 2:13:13 to Gabriel's second place time of 2:16:28. St. Barths's Alexis Wozniak was third in 2:22:42.

June 5 saw 22 students from the King Yen Taekwondo School advance one belt colour as the school conducted their second Quarterly 2024 TKD exams in the Gymnasium of the Helmich Snijders Hillside Christian School in St. Peters.

Some 54 bikers in five categories took part in the second edition of SXM Drag Race on the RN7 in Grand Case on June 6.

Team Frits won the annual Lagoonies Regatta that took place on June 10. Team Chingonas was second and followed by Team Ernst.

FC RISC Takers Under 9 youth soccer teams shone bright at the Johan Cruyff tournament on June 26. The competition featured teams from St. Maarten, Anguilla and Saba. FC RISC Takers won their group matches to advance to the final. The Takers defeated 758 by a score of 3-1 and Anguilla FC 4-1.

Dynamics Sporting Club, a Track and Field club for youth in St. Maarten, announced that it has been significantly affected by the recent bankruptcy filing of JetAir/Caribbean on June 27. The group of 34 persons was booked to travel on JetAir to Curaçao to represent St. Maarten at the Trupial Classics Invitational 2024.

## JULY

The Minister of Sports, Lyndon Lewis, announced that the much needed repairs to the athletics track at the Raoul Illidge Sports Com-

plex have been approved. Repair work will be executed by GCC Sport Services, with a budget allocation of Naf 1,347,657 on July 2.

Two baseball players from the French Baseball and Softball Federation went to Toulouse in April to try-out for the French U18 National Team. Timothy Fleming and Tyrique Lambert were selected from 20 players to join the National team. They participated in the U18 European Championship in Germany on July 8 to August 14.

The Supervisory Board of the National Sports Institute announced the appointment of Jisk Goslinga as the new Director of the National Sports Institute on July 10.

Jayden Blomont was scouted from North Carolina's Combine Academy to enroll in their soccer programme for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year July 12.

The St Maarten Netball team competed in the America's World Youth Under 21 Qualifier Tournament in Guadeloupe July 6 to 15. St Maarten placed 6th. The Jamaica Young Sunshine won the competition defeating Barbados 54-29 in the final.

## AUGUST

Davinio Carti and Jamaar Hilton represented St. Maarten at the OECS boxing championship in St. Lucia August 1. Carti went up against Zhavar Canick of Trinidad and Tobago in the 45kg class. Carti won by a split decision. Hilton faced Joshua Rene from St. Lucia. Rene won by a split decision.

In cycling, Jahkim Carty got the St. Martin national selection off to a brilliant start by winning a rain-soaked U19 time trial in Sandy Ground August 15 and taking a gold medal. He completed the 22K course in 29.16.16. In the female time trial, the U17-18 category was won by Sandy Delta Souma from Guadeloupe.

## SEPTEMBER

The Collectivité of Saint-Martin, in collaboration with its Sports Department, hosted an Open Sports Day on September 7, to encourage participation in various sports activities.

SXM Padel Club partnered with



St. Barths's Fabien Husson leads Gregory Pigeon at the start of the bike segment of the Sunset Triple Mini Triathlon. Husson won all three of the mini triathlons in Beacon Hill organized by the Friendly Island Triathlon Association (FITA).



Test Your Skills Boxing was held at the L.B. Scott Sports Auditorium. Athletes from Bahamas, Curacao and Dominica as well as boxers from both sides of the Friendly Island included Stivanio Martina, Jamaar Hilton, and Alex Hawkins competed.

The Padel School and Sporfie to introduce the first-ever remote Padel level assessment service on September 10. Utilizing Sporfie's advanced streaming technology, SXM Padel Club allows players to have their skill level assessed by an internationally qualified professional from anywhere in the world.

French long distance swimmer Kévin Judic resumed his "Isl4nds Swim Connection" of swimming around the Northern Islands started in 2021 by taking on a 12K swim from Philipsburg to Long Bay, Lowlands, September 14, followed by , September 15, a 15K swim from Philipsburg to Orient Bay.

## OCTOBER

Saint-Martin's young cycling prodigy, Jahkim Carty, continued to impress on the roads of the Caribbean. Almost two months after being crowned Caribbean champion in Saint-Martin, he claimed a resounding victory in the "Fred Ibaló Open," October 5, in Les Abymes, Guadeloupe.

The RBC Little League School Tournament opened with a parade on October 8. The baseball and softball teams gathered at the RBC Bank and marched to the Erwin Baco Richardson Little League

continued on page 37



Bikers take off on the green lights during the SXM Drag Race event held in Hope Estate, Grand Case, in June. (Robert Luckock photo)



Statia's first-ever bocce ball tournament was held on May 5 to help generate the competitive spirit in the young men who will represent the island in the Special Olympics Competition in the Netherlands.



## LOCAL SPORTS continued from page 36

Stadium on Pond Island for the 9:30am opening.

The St. Maarten 37ers U10 baseball team kicked off their campaign in Aruba with a 7-2 victory over the Aruba Stars on October 9.

The St. Maarten Yacht Club (SMYC) hosted a week-long October Sailing Camp from October 7-11, for local children during their school fall break. A total of 29 young sailors enjoyed five days of sailing, swimming and playing games.

October 13 the Saint-Martin Triathlon, organised by SXM Tri Académie and hosted by Grand Case Beach Club, attracted 80 athletes from Saint-Martin, St. Maarten, St. Barths and Guadeloupe. Olivier Noglotte (51), won the Olympic distance in a time of 2:12:36 ahead of Rémy Grange (TTK) 2:13: 20.

The St. Maarten Sports Federation (SMSF) participated in the Caribbean Association of National Olympic Committees (CANOC) General Assembly and Workshop held in Turks and Caicos on October 19 and 20. This reconnection, after a four-year gap, is set to catalyze SMSF's plans for local sports development by granting access to crucial resources and strategic partnerships.

St. Maarten was well represented at the 32nd annual O.E.C.S. (Organization of Eastern Caribbean States) Swimming Championships in St. Vincent October 13. The team travelled with Coach Eline Broere. Local swimmers won the majority of their heats and improved on their personal swim times. Kjeld van der Meer won a silver and bronze medal and Mila van Baalen won a bronze medal.

Four countries, Antigua, Martinique, Bahamas, and Anguilla sent boxers to St. Maarten's Fourth Annual Battle of the Islands October 15.

Emilien Le Normand took first place in the Laser class of the Hope Ross Sailing Series, sponsored by Grant Thornton October 19. Sailors competed in five different classes.

Calvin B. Mardembrough Jr., a growing figure in competitive bodybuilding won two medals at the NPC Ultimate Grand Prix in Florida October 28. Competing against more than 200 elite ath-

letes, Mardembrough Jr. claimed a silver medal in the 35+ Men's Physique category and a bronze in the Class A division.

Also on October 28, Antigua won the Caribbean Dinghy Nation's Cup Championship for the fifth consecutive time. Antigua took first place with 4432 points, followed by St. Maarten with 4260 points, and St. Martin in third place with 3942 points.

Black Belt Taekwondo Grand Master Theo Liu was invited by the organization committee of the Global Traditional Taekwondo Federation (GTTF) to attend the summit in Korea where he earned his 9th Dan Black Belt.

### NOVEMBER

The fifth of the month saw "Pa Kouri" from St. Eustatius emerging as the champion boat of the 13th Annual Wahoo Tournament, organised by St. Maarten Sport Fishing Foundation when results were announced at Grumpy's Bar.

After the November second awards ceremony, St. Maarten's delegation of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu athletes returned from the CFJJBC Caribes Open Championship in Guadeloupe with 5 gold medals and two silvers. The competition took place at the Palais de Sports in Le Gosier, Guadeloupe.

Karibuni, a DIAM 24 triamaran, won the St. Maarten Yacht Club's Grand Prix in Great Bay November 10. Five trimarans completed four races to mark the first event of the DIAM 24 racing season. AIR NEST finished second.

St. Maarten kept their place in League B of the CONCACAF Nations League after playing home and away games against Haiti, Puerto Rico and Aruba in Group C. Sint Maarten finished third after Haiti and Puerto Rico.

The 37th Around the Island Relay Race was held on November 13. SXM Tri Académie took first place in the adult group out of a total of 57 teams. SXM Tri Académie completed the course in 2 hours 7 minutes 53 seconds. IGR Team 1 was second across the finish line with a time of 2 hours 13 minutes 54 seconds.

Saint Martin won 2024 Concordia Cup to tie the twenty years ongo-

ing series at 10. The annual event of the Concordia Cup Golf Tournament was held over the weekend of November 9th and 10th. Started in 2005, this tournament is based on golf's "Ryder Cup" and pits Dutch side St. Maarten Golf Association (SMGA) players and French side Saint Martin (Les Tamarins) players.

The St. Maarten National Basketball Association (SXMNBA) hosted the Female Basketball Exhibition from November 29 to December 1. The showcase highlighted talent from St. Martin, Anguilla, St. Eustatius, and Suriname. Teams competed in 5-on-5 and 3-on-3 games at the LB Scott Sports Auditorium and the Rupert Maynard Community Centre in St. Peters. In the end Suriname overwhelmed Anguilla 65-26 and then bested St. Martin 37-30.

### DECEMBER

The St. Maarten Little League featured Methodist Agogic Center Boys as they clobbered Oranje Stars 15-2 in the first week of December. Sister Borgia Tigers blasted St. Joseph Bees 11-5 and MPC Braves Boys High School beat MPC Stars 12-4. In the girls divisions MPC Angels Girls High School squeezed past Sundial Owls 11-10 and MAC Diamonds held Magda Strikers 10-8. In Tee-ball Lions bested Snappers 10-8 Hawks defeated Blitzing Bees 15-14. Also Methodist Agogic Center shut out Oranje School 13-0.

December 2, it was announced that extensive renovation work at the Raoul Illidge Stadium to install a new running track and football field is progressing well, despite weather setbacks, with the facility estimated to reopen for sports in January 2025.

The RBC Little League School tournament is in full swing. Action began with the Tee ball division December 6 to 7. The Hawks squeezed past Blitzing Best 25-24. In the girl's elementary school competition MAC Diamonds bested Magda Strikers 10-8. In the boys group Sister Borgia clobbered St. Joseph 20-7 and Mac defeated Oranje School 13-0. In the High School division Catholic Squad trounced Hillside 14-5. In the



Jahkim Carty won the U19 time trial in Sandy Ground.

girl's group MPC blasted Sundial 14-6 and Catholic Squad girls beat Hillside 17-7. The MAC elementary school boys then faced Magda Strikers and won 19-9. The Magda Striker girls redeemed the loss, shellacking Hillside 12-1. In the final game of the weekend MAC boys took out the Sister Borgia Tigers 10-0.

The St. Maarten Golf Association held their annual Santa Scramble at the Mullet Bay Golf Course on Saturday, December 7. Fifteen teams of four competed in the 18-hole competition. The team of Elodie Royer, Maribe Morteau, Jonathan Nyuiadzi and Yawo Nyuiadzi won with a net score of 58. The holiday scramble raised money to help four youth organizations including Junior Golf, Labs Sports Academy, Special Olympics and No Kidding with our Kids Foundation.

Twenty-one sailboats competed in the 21st Course de l'Alliance sponsored by FKG on Dec 10. The teams were divided into groups of Caribbean Sailing Association 1, CSA2, CSA Multihull, and the Diam fleet. In the CSA 1 Class, competition was fierce among eight boats. Maelia secured first place, followed by Dauntless in second and More Zessin' in third.

Simon Chuinard from Saint-Barthélemy won the third annual St. Maarten Marathon on December 10 in a time of 3:23:45, shaving ten seconds off his previous and first St. Maarten marathon finish time of 3:33 in 2022. Some 40 runners took to the start line at 4:15 am in darkness to run the 42K distance, a complete circumnavigation of the island, in cool and rainy conditions. From the 40 runners who started three did not finish.

The Green Meds SXM 5K Run and Walk, was won overall by Nahiah Wyatt (13) in a time of 21:28, followed by Risto Chalkov (27) in 22:20, and third place to Collis Morgen (14) in 22:29 De-

cember 11. Wyatt was running in the Boys under 18, Chalkov Men 18-39, and Morgan Boys under 18.

The women's race was won by Martine Loubster (women 18-39) in 25:27, second Thirza Sollie (18-39) in 27:45 and third place to Astrid van der Mate (18-39) in 28:15.

St. Maarten's own Denzel Richardson featured in the 2024 World Baseball Softball Confederation (WBSC) Premier12, the third instalment of the baseball championship of Mexico. The competition brought together the world's top 12 national teams under the banner of the WBSC. Amid fierce competition, Richardson proved himself a formidable presence on the international stage. He delivered an impressive performance, boasting a .400 batting average with two home runs and three doubles. Richardson also led his team with the highest slugging percentage.

Students from the King Yen Taekwondo school passed their quarterly exam and earned the right to move up to the next higher level belt. The examinations were held in the in the Helmich Snijders Hillside Christian School Gymnasium December 21. The students underwent a battery of physical tests that involved the demonstration of martial arts Forms (Taeguks), several defensive and offensive techniques, and sparring. The testing concluded with the students having to break boards and do free sparring.

Sports closed for the holiday break with Adaya Bourne and Nigel Fontenelle representing St. Maarten on the world stage during the World Aquatic Championships held in Budapest. The pair proved that hard work, practice and dedication does pay off for an athlete.

The year 2025 is already looking exciting for St. Maarten sports fans, as many of the athletes will be returning and new and up comers are chomping at the bit to make their mark.



Extensive renovation work continued at the Raoul Illidge Sport Complex.



# SHOWBIZ IN 2024

## Taylor Swift, Oasis and Sean 'Diddy' Combs make headlines

**LONDON--**From Taylor Swift's record-breaking Eras tour to Sean 'Diddy' Combs' arrest, 2024 saw various stories from the entertainment world dominate headlines. Below are some of the biggest.

- Taylor Swift won more awards, released another hit album and performed her Eras tour, the first to surpass \$1 billion in revenue. Her Vienna shows were cancelled after authorities foiled a planned attack. Swift closed Eras' European leg in London before she wraps it completely in Vancouver on Dec. 8.

- U.S. rapper and producer Sean "Diddy" Combs pleaded not guilty to charges he used his business empire, including his record label Bad Boy Entertainment, to sexually abuse women.

Combs has denied wrongdoing and his lawyers have argued the sexual activity described by prosecutors was consensual.

- One Direction member Liam Payne was found dead after falling from a third-floor hotel room balcony in Buenos Aires, triggering an outpouring of tributes from fans.

- Oasis announced a series of reunion gigs. Fans waited long hours in virtual queues to buy tickets only to find hiked prices as part of a "dynamic pricing" scheme, sparking probes into Ticketmaster over the sale.

- A New Mexico judge dismissed involuntary manslaughter charges against actor Alec Baldwin, agreeing with his lawyers that prosecutors and police withheld evidence on the source of the live round that killed cinematographer Halyna Hutchins when he pointed a gun at her on the set of Western "Rust" in 2021.

Armourer Hannah Gutierrez was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to 18 months.

The film premiered at a low-key Polish film festival in November.

- Harvey Weinstein's 2020 conviction for sexual assault and rape was overturned by New York's highest court, reopening the

landmark case that fuelled the #MeToo movement.

- Singer Justin Timberlake pleaded guilty in a New York State court to a lesser traffic charge than drunk driving - driving while ability impaired - after he was arrested when police spotted him failing to obey a stop sign and veering off lane.

- Beyoncé's "Cowboy Carter" became the first album by a Black woman to land at No. 1 on the Billboard Top Country Albums chart.

- "Inside Out 2" became the highest-grossing animated film of all time, taking \$1.698 billion at the global box office.

- The world said goodbye to: actors Donald Sutherland, James Earl Jones, Maggie Smith, Shannen Doherty, Carl Weathers and Louis Gossett Jr., music supremo Quincy Jones and singer-songwriter Kris Kristofferson among others.



SINGER JUSTIN TIMBERLAKE ARRIVES TO APPEAR IN COURT IN SAG HARBOR, NEW YORK, U.S., SEPTEMBER 13, 2024.



RAWDAH MOHAMED POSES ON THE RED CARPET DURING ARRIVALS FOR THE SCREENING OF THE FILM "THE APPRENTICE" IN COMPETITION AT THE 77TH CANNES FILM FESTIVAL IN CANNES, FRANCE, MAY 20, 2024.



US ACTOR ALEC BALDWIN ATTENDS HIS TRIAL FOR INVOLUNTARY MANSLAUGHTER AT SANTA FE COUNTY DISTRICT COURT IN SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO, ON JULY 12, 2024. IN OCTOBER 2021, ON THE NEW MEXICO SET OF THE WESTERN MOVIE "RUST," A GUN POINTED BY BALDWIN DISCHARGED A LIVE ROUND, KILLING THE FILM'S CINEMATOGRAPHER HALYNA HUTCHINS AND WOUNDING ITS DIRECTOR.



LIZA LAPIRA, JUNE SQUIBB, YVETTE NICOLE BROWN, MAYA HAWKE, KENSINGTON TALLMAN, AMY POEHLER, AYO EDEBIRI, TONY HALE AND LEWIS BLACK ATTEND THE WORLD PREMIERE OF THE FILM "INSIDE OUT 2" IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, U.S., JUNE 10, 2024.



# SHOWBIZ IN 2024

BEYONCÉ WALKS ON STAGE TO ACCEPT THE INNOVATOR AWARD DURING THE IHEARTMUSIC AWARDS AT DOLBY THEATRE IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, U.S., APRIL 1, 2024.



A MAN WALKS PAST A MURAL OF OASIS BAND MEMBERS LIAM AND NOEL GALLAGHER BY ARTIST SNOW GRAFFITI ON THE WALL OF THE COACH AND HORSES PUB IN WHITEFIELD, NEAR MANCHESTER, BRITAIN, AUGUST 31, 2024.



ARIANA GRANDE POSES ON THE RED CARPET DURING THE OSCARS ARRIVALS AT THE 96TH ACADEMY AWARDS IN HOLLYWOOD, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA, U.S., MARCH 10, 2024.



FORMER FILM PRODUCER HARVEY WEINSTEIN APPEARS IN MANHATTAN CRIMINAL COURT FOR A STATUS HEARING TO BE RETRIED, FOLLOWING HIS OVERTURNED SEX CRIMES CONVICTION, IN NEW YORK CITY, NEW YORK, U.S., JULY 9, 2024.



DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE AND U.S. VICE PRESIDENT KAMALA HARRIS AND MAYA RUDOLPH REACT AS THEY SIT OPPOSITE ONE ANOTHER ON THE DAY HARRIS MAKES AN APPEARANCE ON SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE IN NEW YORK CITY, U.S., NOVEMBER 2, 2024.



FANS WALK ON THE 'SWIFTIE STEPS' TO ATTEND A TAYLOR SWIFT CONCERT, FOLLOWING THE CANCELLATION OF THREE TAYLOR SWIFT CONCERTS IN VIENNA BECAUSE OF A PLANNED ATTACK, AT WEMBLEY STADIUM IN LONDON, BRITAIN, AUGUST 15, 2024.



## A look back at the notable deaths of 2024

**NEW YORK**--Below is a compilation of some of the most notable deaths of global figures from the worlds of showbusiness, politics, sports and art in 2024.

### JANUARY

**Glynis Johns**, the husky-voiced British actress best known for her role as a suffragette who hires a magical nanny in the 1964 movie musical "Mary Poppins," died at the age of 100.

**Mario Zagallo**, the talented soccer left winger who won four World Cups for Brazil as player or coach, died at 92.

**Franz Beckenbauer**, Germany's soccer great who also won World Cups for his country as both player and manager, died at 78.

**Norman Jewison**, Canadian film director of "In the Heat of the Night," "Moonstruck," and "Fiddler on the Roof," died at 97.

**Chita Rivera**, a Broadway legend who created the role of Puerto Rican firebrand Anita in "West Side Story," died at 91.

### FEBRUARY

**Carl Weathers**, an American actor who shot to stardom playing boxer Apollo Creed in the "Rocky" movies, died at 76.

**Vittorio Emanuele of Savoy**, who lived in exile in Switzerland and was the only son of Italy's last king, Umberto II, died at 86.

**Sebastian Pinera**, the former president of Chile best known abroad for overseeing the 2010 rescue of miners trapped underground, died in a helicopter crash at 74.

**Seiji Ozawa**, the Japanese orchestra conductor considered one of the foremost of his generation, died at 88.

**Kelvin Kiptum**, Kenya's marathon world record holder, was killed in a traffic accident at 24.

**Alexei Navalny**, a fierce domestic opponent of Russian President Vladimir Putin, died in an Arctic prison at 47.

**Brian Mulroney**, who as Canadian prime minister struck a free trade deal with the U.S., died at 84.

### MARCH

**Joe Lieberman**, a former U.S. senator and Democratic vice presidential nominee, died at 82.

### APRIL

**Louis Conter**, the last survivor from the battleship USS Arizona that was destroyed at Pearl Harbor during World War Two, died at 102.

**Peter Higgs**, the British Nobel-winning physicist whose theory about an undetected particle changed science,

died at 94.

**O.J. Simpson**, the American football star and actor who was sensationally acquitted of murdering his former wife in 1995, died at 76.

**Roberto Cavalli**, the Italian fashion designer known for his animal-print designs, died at 83.

**Terry Anderson**, a U.S. journalist who was held captive by Islamist militants in Lebanon from 1985 to 1991, died at 76.

### MAY

**Roger Corman**, American maestro of low-budget cinema, died at 98.

**James Simons**, an American mathematician and hedge fund founder known as the "Quant King," died at 86.

**Alice Munro**, Nobel-winning Canadian writer whose exquisitely crafted tales made her the master of the short story, died at 92.

**Ebrahim Raisi**, who rose through Iran's ranks from hardline prosecutor to uncompromising president, died at 63 in a helicopter crash.

**Ivan Boesky**, the financier who gave birth to the "greed is good" mantra before going to prison in an insider trading scandal, died at 87.

### JUNE

**Tin Oo**, a key figure in Myanmar's pro-democracy movement and close ally of Aung San Suu Kyi, died at 97.

**William Anders**, an American astronaut known for capturing the famed 'Earthrise' photo during the Apollo 8 mission, died in a plane crash at 90.

**Willie Mays**, American baseball legend with all-around skills, died at 93.

**Donald Sutherland**, the Canadian actor who charmed audiences in movies such as "M\*A\*S\*H," "Kluge," and "The Hunger Games," died at 88.

### JULY

**James Inhofe**, a former U.S. senator who represented Oklahoma and was a stalwart of the political right, died at 89.

**Dr Ruth Westheimer**, the chirpy therapist known as "Dr Ruth" who became a popular American TV sex guru, died at 96.

**Shannen Doherty**, a star of 1990s TV show "Beverly Hills, 90210" died at 53.

**Bob Newhart**, who fled the tedium of an accounting job to become a master of deadpan humor as a standup comedian and U.S. sitcom star, died at 94.

**Nguyen Phu Trong**, the Marxist-Leninist who led Vietnam for more than a decade, died at 80.

**Sheila Jackson Lee**, a U.S. lawmaker who was a prominent voice on African American and women's rights, died at 74.

**Edna O'Brien**, who wrote of her native Ireland in such febrile prose that it sparked national outrage, died at 93.

## Last Farewells: Notable deaths of 2024



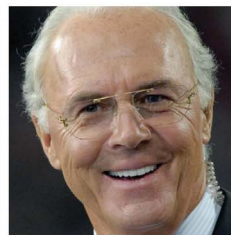
**Alexei Navalny**

**47.** Anticorruption activist who led opposition to **Putin** for over a decade while enduring arrests, assaults and near-fatal poisoning



**Dame Maggie Smith**

**89.** Actress who excelled in both tragedy and comedy, best known for roles in **Downton Abbey** and in **Harry Potter** films



**Franz Beckenbauer**

**78.** Football legend, won a World Cup with West Germany, as both player and manager, and two Ballon d'Or awards



**Jimmy Carter**

**100.** Longest-lived President of U.S., former peanut farmer won 2002 Nobel Peace Prize for conflict resolution



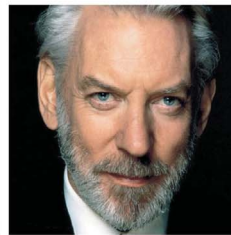
**Quincy Jones**

**91.** Music producer and composer, worked with many stars including **Michael Jackson** on best-selling album "**Thriller**"



**Liam Payne**

**31.** Member of **One Direction**, one of the most successful boybands of all time. Also enjoyed solo success



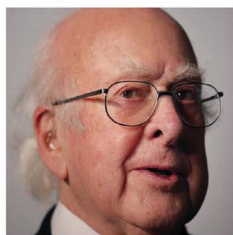
**Donald Sutherland**

**88.** Versatile actor known to different generations for his roles in films such as **The Dirty Dozen**, **MASH**, and **Hunger Games**



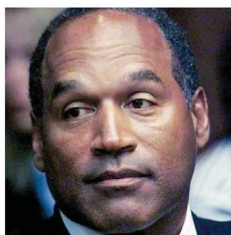
**Dr Manmohan Singh**

**92.** India's first Sikh Prime Minister with reputation for honesty, launched groundbreaking social and economic reforms



**Peter Higgs**

**94.** Nobel-prize winning physicist who first showed how new **Higgs boson** particle helped bind universe together



**OJ Simpson**

**76.** Former American footballer and actor who was acquitted of murder of ex-wife **Nicole Brown** in 1995 "trial of the century"



**James Earl Jones**

**93.** Acting great known for distinctive voice — most famously as **Star Wars** villain **Darth Vader** and **The Lion King's Mufasa**



**Roberto Cavalli**

**83.** Celebrated Italian designer who created flamboyant clothes to dress stars from **Brigitte Bardot** to **Spice Girls**

Sources: NewsAhead, Emma Luck

Pictures: Getty Images, Newscom

© GRAPHIC NEWS

**William Calley**, who during the Vietnam War led his U.S. Army platoon into the hamlet of My Lai and carried out one of the worst war crimes in American military history, died at 80.

**Ismael Haniyeh**, a leader of Palestinian militant group Hamas and face of its international diplomacy, was assassinated in Tehran.

**Fuad Shukur**, a founding member of Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, was killed by Israel.

### AUGUST

**Gena Rowlands**, an acclaimed American actress known for her vivid portrayals of strong, troubled women, died at 94.

**Alain Delon**, the French actor who melted the hearts of millions of film fans whether playing a murderer, hoodlum or hitman, died at 88.

**Phil Donahue**, who changed the face of U.S. daytime television with a long-running syndicated talk show, died at 88.

**Mike Lynch**, a British tech tycoon who founded software

firm Autonomy and spent years fighting charges he had inflated its value, died at 59 when his yacht sunk off Sicily.

**Sven-Goran Eriksson**, the charismatic Swedish soccer manager who became the first foreigner to lead the England national team, died at 76.

### SEPTEMBER

**Rebecca Cheptegei**, a Ugandan Olympic marathon runner, died at 33 after she was set on fire by her boyfriend in Kenya.

**James Earl Jones**, an imposing stage and screen presence who voiced "Star Wars" villain **Darth Vader**, died at 93.

**Alberto Fujimori**, the former Peruvian president who steered economic growth during the 1990s but was later jailed for human rights abuses, died at 86.

**Tito Jackson**, founding member of the popular Black American Motown group The Jackson 5, died at 70.

**Maggie Smith**, the British actress of stage and screen known for her roles in the "Harry Potter" movies and "Downton Abbey," died at 89.

**Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah**, who led Hezbollah through decades of conflict, was killed by Israel in an airstrike.

**Kris Kristofferson**, an influential American singer-songwriter of works such as "Me and Bobby McGee" and a successful actor, died at 88.

### OCTOBER

**Ratan Tata**, the former Tata Group chairman who put his Indian conglomerate on the map with a string of high-profile acquisitions, died at 86.

**Ethel Kennedy**, who married into the Kennedy clan and was present when her husband Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated during his 1968 presidential campaign, died at 96.

**Alex Salmond**, who helped change the course of Scottish politics and pushed Scotland to the verge of independence from the UK, died at 69.

**Mitzi Gaynor**, the American star of "South Pacific" and other 1950s Hollywood musicals, died at 93.

**Liam Payne**, member of globally popular British boy

band One Direction, died after falling from a hotel balcony in Buenos Aires at the age of 31.

**Yahya Sinwar**, the Hamas leader and architect of the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel, was killed in Gaza at 62.

**Fethullah Gulen**, who built a powerful Islamic movement in Turkey but was later accused of orchestrating an attempted coup, died at 83.

**Terri Garr**, the American actress whose sunny personality lit up the screen in films such as "Young Frankenstein" and "Tootsie," died at 79.

### NOVEMBER

**Quincy Jones**, who worked with musicians ranging from Count Basie to Frank Sinatra and reshaped pop music with his collaborations with Michael Jackson, died at 91.

**John Prescott**, Britain's longest serving deputy prime minister and working class trailblazer, died at 86.