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# The Daily Herald



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## St. Maarten sees 16.9% growth in air arrivals, 14% rise in cruise arrivals in second quarter

PHILIPSBURG--The Department of Statistics STAT has reported that St. Maarten recorded 209,876 airport passenger arrivals and 236,391 cruise passengers between April and June 2025, reflecting a 16.9% increase in airport arrivals compared to 179,552 for the same period in 2024 and a 14% increase in cruise passengers compared to 207,428 in Q2 2024.

STAT said in a press release that because of the change in methodology, direct comparisons with data from previous years cannot be made. To maintain some level of continuity during this transition

and following the advice of Princess Juliana International Airport operating company PJIAE, STAT used the January to December 2024 airport arrival figures as a baseline, adjusted by deducting 10% to account for resident travellers. This adjustment is consistent with historical Immigration Office data collected over the past decade.

STAT said PJIAE has not traditionally served as the Department's primary source for visitor arrival data, as its system provides only aggregated passenger counts

*Continued on page 8*

## Law on passenger data submission to reach Parliament in 2026, says Baly

PHILIPSBURG--Proposed legislation mandating the submission of Passenger Name Record (PNR) and Advance Passenger Information (API) data will be submitted to Parliament in 2026, Governor Ajamu Baly announced Tuesday at the opening of the new

parliamentary year. He said the absence of such legislation continues to hinder the full implementation of automated border control.

The legislation is also intended to strengthen protections under the National Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Action Plan and create a safer, more responsive border regime.

In the meantime, Immigration and Border Protection Services (IBPS) continues its modernisation efforts. Recent upgrades include the launch of FMS/FMS-online and RADEX for digital case management and border automation. Renovations at the Foreigner Detention Centre are ongoing to bring the facility in line with European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and international human rights standards.

IBPS is also preparing to launch a Trusted Agent Programme to improve service delivery to the mari-

*Continued on page 8*



Royal Caribbean's "Star of the Seas", the world's largest cruise ship, called at Port St. Maarten on Thursday. It is Royal Caribbean's newest ship, the Icon Class super-sequel. The mega ship started its maiden voyage on August 31, departing from Florida's Port Canaveral. The ship can host up to 5,610 guests (double occupancy) with a maximum capacity of 7,600 passengers in addition to 2,350 crew members, and it offers four different itineraries for the Eastern Caribbean and one for the Western Caribbean. In its announcement of this inaugural call, Port St. Maarten described it as "a momentous occasion that reaffirms our island's position as a premier cruise destination in the Caribbean."

## Agreements on detention and forensic care at JVO

THE HAGUE--The four Ministers of Justice of the Kingdom of the Netherlands have made new agreements on support during detention and cooperation in forensic care. "It's reassuring to know that you can rely on the other countries when you can't manage it yourself," said Aruba's Minister of Justice Arthur Dow-

ers, chair of this Judicial Four-Country Consultation JVO. Curaçao and the Netherlands will collaborate on the further training of people working in detention, but specifically also institutions like the Capriles Clinic. "We have reached an agreement on training for professionals who work with forensic patients and

detainees. It is a valuable project for the islands," said Curaçao's Minister of Justice Shalten Hato. The Netherlands is offering financial support, but the amounts have not yet been announced.

St. Maarten and Aruba discussed support for detention, one of the biggest challenges St.

*Continued on page 7*

## Three men convicted in Gentlemen's Club shooting, 2 sentenced to 8 years

PHILIPSBURG--The Court of First Instance on Thursday convicted three men in connection with the fatal shooting of 23-year-old Tion Scott near the parking lot of Empire Gentlemen's Club in Defiance on April 13, 2025.

Two of the defendants, A.M.E.C. and A.A.C., were found guilty of attempted manslaughter and illegal firearm possession. The court rejected their claims of self-

fence and sentenced both to eight years in prison.

The third defendant, M.S., was acquitted of attempted manslaughter after the court accepted his statement that he had only fired into the air. Video footage did not show him firing in the direction of Scott. However, he was convicted of illegal firearm possession and sentenced to three years.

The court ruled it could not be established who had fired the fatal shot, nor that the three had collaborated in causing Scott's death. Still, all were declared jointly and severally liable for damages awarded to Scott's family: US \$7,655 in material damages and Naf. 25,000 in immaterial damages.

"This case underlines the need

*Continued on page 7*

### IN BRIEF

#### Philipsburg INNOVATION HUB VISIT

Minister Melissa Gumbs visited Oceana Innovation Hub in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, on August 29 to observe youth-led educational initiatives and explore opportunities for regional collaboration. Page 8.

#### Philipsburg RESPONSE TO ADVICE

The Kingdom Charter Committee 70 has submitted its response to the unsolicited advice issued by the Kingdom Council of State. Page 3.

#### Kralendijk MENTAL HEALTH

A large-scale scientific study which looks into trauma experiences and mental health among young people in the Caribbean Netherlands was launched on Thursday, September 11. Page 11.

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**WEEKENDER**  
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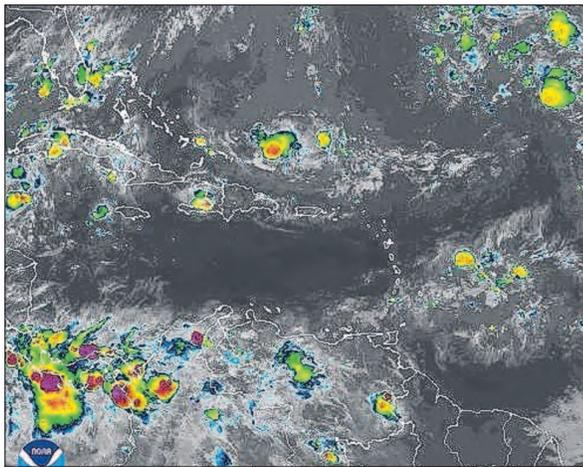
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Weather

Today: Generally fair to partly cloudy, with isolated showers possible.

Winds: East-northeast to east-southeast, 4-12mph.

Sea conditions: Light.

Seas: 2-4 feet.

Forecast high: 33°C 91°F

Forecast low: 28°C 82°F

SYNOPSIS: A high-pressure system will limit showers and maintain light to gentle winds. Available moisture transported by the winds could trigger brief showers. Expect hot and humid conditions to persist. Stay hydrated, keep cool, and seek the shade whenever possible. Marine conditions will remain tranquil for the next several days.

SPECIAL FEATURE: Remaining names for this year's hurricane season (now to November 30): Gabrielle, Humberto, Imelda, Jerry, Karen, Lorenzo, Melissa, Nestor, Olga, Pablo, Rebekah, Sebastian, Tanya, Van, Wendy.

The Meteorological Department of St. Maarten will continue to monitor the Atlantic and inform the public accordingly.

Outlook through Saturday evening: Partly cloudy to cloudy, with isolated showers possible toward the end of the day.

Sunrise: Friday, Saturday and Sunday, 6:00am.

Sunset: Friday, 6:17pm; Saturday, 6:16pm; Sunday, 6:15pm.

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Table with 5 columns: Date, Vessel, Place, Arrival, Departure. Rows for Sept. 12, 13, and 14.

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POLICE STATION Philipsburg tel. 542-2222 Simpson Bay tel. 545-5500 HOT LINE 108 EMERGENCY 911 FIRE DEPARTMENT Tel. 542-6001 or 919 HOSPITAL Medical Center, Cay Hill 24-hour Emergency Service tel. 543-1111 or 910 AMBULANCE Philipsburg tel. 542-2111 or 912 MEDICAL EMERGENCIES For medical emergencies, patients can visit the Emergency Room of the St. Maarten Medical Center. Tel.: 543-1111 (ext. 1)

SXM Animal Welfare Foundation Ambulance Team 520-8887 CRIME STOPPERS ANONYMOUS TIP LINE: 543-TIPS(8477) TELEPHONE INFO Tel-em: 542-2211 WEATHER INFO: 123 ST. MAARTEN TOURIST OFFICE Krappa Building, Juancho Yrausquin Blvd. #6. Tel: +1 721-5490200, fax: +1 721-542-0664 COLE BAY COMMUNITY COUNCIL: meeting 1st. Thursday of month at Sun Flower Kinder Garden School, Union Rd. Cole Bay at 7:30pm

SERVICE CLUBS

THE ROTARY CLUB OF ST. MAARTEN meets every Wednesday at 12:30 p.m. at 79 Bush Rd., Unit#10 (Le Grand Marche Complex). Rotary Mid Isle meets every Tuesday 7 p.m. at Pineapple Pete's, Simpson Bay. Rotary Sunrise meets every Tuesday at 7am at Gingerbread Cafe located in Belair Beach Hotel Terrace Restaurant. Rotary Club St. Martin Nord meet at the Grand Case Beach Club Sunday at 7:30 p.m. THE ROTARACT CLUB OF ST. MAARTEN SUNRISE meets every 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month at 7pm at The University of St. Martin. Email: rotaractstmsunrise@outlook.com LIONS meeting at the Upper Princess Quarter Community Centre Lions Den in Sucker Garden every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7 p.m. ST. MAARTEN LEO CLUB meeting at the Lions Den every 1st, 3rd Saturday every month at 11:00 am. JCI St. Maarten (JAYCEES) meeting at the Philipsburg Jubilee Library every last Wednesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. Business attire required. PHILIPSBURG TOASTMASTERS CLUB bi-monthly sessions every first and third Thursday of every month at the Library conference room at 8:00 p.m. ST. MARTIN MUSEUM Frontstreet 7, Philipsburg, tel 542-4917 Opening hours from March 1st:

Agenda St. Maarten / St. Martin

Monday - Friday: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday & Sundays: closed. ALCOHOLICS ANONYMOUS Mon., Wed., Fri. 6:00pm, Red Cross Building, Airport Road, Sunday at Guana Bay Beach 8:30am. Tel. 520-5169 Zoom meetings everyday from 8:30am to 9:30am and from 6pm to 7pm. Zoom ID - 6960282745 and the password - 767909 ST. MAARTEN AIDS FOUNDATION 55 Welfare Road tel +5532626/+5884636 www.sxmidsfoundation.org; Facebook: sxmidsfoundation NATURE FOUNDATION ST. MAARTEN Welsberg Street 1A, units 25-26, Cole Bay. Tel. 544-4267, Fax. 544-4268. Email: info@naturefoundationsxm.org ANIMALS R. FRIENDS Mailbox La Palapa Center, Simpson Bay. Email: arf\_sxm@yahoo.com, www.arfxsm.org SINT MAARTEN LIBRARY 1. Main Branch, Walter J.A. Nisbeth Road #3, upstairs of the Adolphus Richardson Blvd, Pondfill Philipsburg Tel 542 2970. Opening hours: Mon - Fri: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., Sat 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. 2. Cay Hill Satellite, Jackal Road #4, at the Hillside Christian School - Asha Stevens Campus, Cay Hill. Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2:30 p.m. - 6 p.m. Info@sxmlibrary.org 3. Belvedere Satellite, Low Estate Road #3 at the Belvedere Community Center in Belvedere. Opening hours: Mon-Fri: 2:30 p.m. - 6 p.m. WOMEN'S DESK, Hope Estate Road #4; Hope Estate Upper Princess Quarter (1721) 542-7940 / (1721) 520-1145 / (1721) 520-1146

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tion call: 5424432 (Jennifer). St. Maarten/St. Martin Alliance For Equally (SAFE) Tel: +1-721-5504221 www.safesxm.com facebook:safe.sxm G+ : +safe.sxm

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Always progressing

That St. Maarten recorded a 16.9% increase in visitor air arrivals (see related story) with 209,876 passengers in the second quarter of this year compared to the same period in 2024 (179,552) is in principle good news. However, the Department of Statistics warned that because of the change in methodology, direct comparisons with figures from previous years cannot be made.

To maintain some level of continuity during this transition and following the advice of Princess Juliana International Airport Operating Company PJIAE, STAT used the January to December 2024 airport arrival figures as a baseline, adjusted by deducting 10% to account for resident travellers. This is said to be consistent with historical Immigration Office data collected over the past decade.

STAT noted that PJIAE has not traditionally served as the department's primary source for visitor arrival data, as their system provides only aggregated passenger counts and does not differentiate between residents and non-residents.

It considers the current 2024 estimate with 10% reduction accounting for residents a "reasonable benchmark for approximate comparison," despite doubts expressed earlier by - among others - the St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association (SHTA).

But whether completely accurate or not, any double-digit growth is welcome especially in this time of international upheaval, trade conflicts and socioeconomic uncertainty. South-west Airlines recently confirming the start of daily flights from Orlando in April followed by weekend service from Baltimore indicates a continued strong North American demand for the destination, while JetBlue begins flying four times per week from Orlando this December.

Preliminary data also show that 236,391 cruise tourists came between April and June 2025, an increase of 14% compared to the 207,428 recorded during the second quarter in 2024. Here too Thursday's maiden visit of Royal Caribbean's newest and the world's biggest cruise ship "Star of the Seas" boasting a capacity for 5,610 passengers (double-occupancy) with a maximum 7,600 plus 2,350 crew is a sign that Great Bay remains a popular port of call.

The vessel is powered by liquefied natural gas (LNG), a global trend in the maritime industry. This again begs the question whether expressed interest to invest in such a plant with bunkering facility also able to produce cleaner energy for local use is worth seriously looking into.

After all, getting to the top is one thing, staying there quite another. As the Latin motto on St. Maarten's flag and coat of arms says: "Semper pro grediens" (Always progressing).



Members of the committee presenting the response to Prime Minister Dr. Luc Mercelina. From left are: Randolph Duggins, Gwendolien Mossel, Prime Minister Mercelina, and Jason Rogers.

## Kingdom Charter Committee submits response to Council of State Advice

PHILIPSBURG--The Kingdom Charter Committee 70 has submitted its response to the unsolicited advice issued by the Council of State of the Kingdom, marking the latest step in discussions on the 70th anniversary of the Kingdom Charter.

In October 2024, the Council of State published its advice, titled "Samenwerken op basis van wederzijds begrip" (Cooperation Based on Mutual Understanding), commemorating the foundational legal framework adopted on 15 December 1954 that defines the relationship among the Kingdom's constituent countries: the Netherlands,

Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten.

In November 2024, the government of St. Maarten received a request from the State Secretary for Digitalization and Kingdom Relations, Zsolt Szabó, to provide an official response to the Council of State's advice. To ensure a thorough and inclusive reply, Prime Minister and Minister of General Affairs Dr. Luc Mercelina established the Kingdom Charter Committee in March 2025.

The Committee, chaired by Gwendolien Mossel with Jason Rogers as vice-chair and Randolph Duggins as member, prepared the response, which was authored by Dr. Nilda Arduin. The committee engaged extensively with key stakeholders, including former and current government officials, President of Parliament Member of Parliament (MP) Sarah Wescot-Williams, representatives from the One SXM Association, and the Pro Soualiga Foundation. According to the Committee, these consultations were "instrumental in shaping a balanced and forward-looking intervention."

The Committee's work was supported by the Department of the Interior

and Kingdom Relations (BAK) of the Ministry of General Affairs, led by Angelique Gumbs, which provided technical guidance and coordination throughout the process.

On September 1, 2025, the Committee formally submitted its report, titled "A New Dialogue Empowered by Mutual Trust" to Prime Minister Mercelina. The report calls for renewed dialogue and emphasises the importance of mutual respect, understanding and cooperation in strengthening the bonds within the Kingdom.

Prime Minister Mercelina praised the Committee's efforts, stating, "The Kingdom Charter has been the cornerstone of our shared history for over seven decades. With this report, Sint Maarten reaffirms its commitment to shaping a future that is based on equality, fairness, and mutual trust. I extend my gratitude to the Committee, the many stakeholders, and BAK under the leadership of Ms. Angelique Gumbs for ensuring that our nation's voice is both clear and principled in this important dialogue."

## BTP launches national school stamp design competition

PHILIPSBURG--Bureau Telecommunications and Post St. Maarten (BTP) on Thursday announced the launch of a nationwide School Stamp Design Competition in anticipation of the Strategic Postal Business Meeting to be hosted in Sint Maarten on November 5-6, 2025.

BTP said in a press release that this international forum will bring together postal leaders to discuss modernizing networks and services through collaboration, innovation, and best practices.

The competition invites students from Grade 5 and Grade 6 of all public and private primary schools on the island to design a commemorative postal stamp reflecting St. Maarten's culture, heritage, people, or natural beauty. The initiative aims to engage young people creatively, raise awareness of the importance of postal services, and celebrate the island's role in the global postal community.

"The stamp competition is an opportunity for our youth to leave a lasting mark on our national history both in the Postal Sector and our Cultural Heritage," said Judianne Labega-Hoeve, Interim Director of BTP. "Through this initiative, we want to spark interest in philately, highlight the continued significance of postal services, and showcase Sint Maarten's unique identity to the world. We encourage every eligible student to participate and look forward to seeing their inspiring designs."

Entries must be submitted by the eligible student through the

student's school to BTP by October 1, 2025. The winning design will be issued as an official Commemorative Postal Stamp of St. Maarten in 2026, with prizes including an iPad, a Beats by Dre headset, and a Casio G Shock watch. Winners will be announced in October,

and the winning stamp will be officially unveiled during the International Postal Conference in November 2025. Further details are outlined in an official letter distributed to school boards by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport.

## SHTA's VISIT St. Maarten magazine publisher offers MICE campaign

PHILIPSBURG--NorthSouthNet, publisher of St. Maarten Hospitality and Trade Association's (SHTA) in-room "VISIT" magazine in partnership with e-group communications, this month symbolically launched a new Meetings and Incentives, Conferences and Exhibition (MICE) Campaign at the befitting historical location of "Pasture Piece".

The monumental outside event space in the Cul-de-Sac Valley is considered part of the target group to benefit from the new campaign to highlight St. Maarten in the world of corporate event planners.

The 2025 "VISIT" edition dedicated a special on the important MICE industry topic, sowing the seeds for the campaign kicking off last week. SHTA and VISIT St. Maarten/St. Martin Magazine by NorthSouthNet try to contribute to the success of the destination where it sees opportunities on a yearly basis.

VISIT Magazine amongst others contributes to a yearly advertisement campaign in newspaper USA Today. The campaign consists of 40,000 emails sent to screened and susceptible operators, agents and media in the meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions (MICE) Industry in the "E-Group" network.

About half of St. Maarten hotels have one or more dedicated spaces for executive retreats, trainings, workshops and/or conferences, and are expected to benefit greatly from this exposure. Hotels participating in the campaign have over the past months tailored their own campaigns, which commenced over the past weeks.

## Armed robbery of bread truck

WILLEMSTAD--A bread delivery truck was robbed on Cubaweg in Curaçao in the early hours of Wednesday, according to police reports. The suspects made off with a significant amount of cash.

Three men, dressed entirely in black and armed with machetes, threatened the truck's employees before fleeing with a cash box.

Police arrived shortly after the incident, but the suspects had already escaped. The exact amount of money stolen has not been disclosed.

Authorities are investigating the case and are calling on potential witnesses to come forward.

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## CPS calls for lifestyle changes as region marks Caribbean Wellness Day

PHILIPSBURG--The Collective Prevention Service (CPS) is calling on residents to review their eating habits and daily behaviours to help prevent chronic diseases, as Caribbean Wellness Day (CWD) is observed on Saturday, September 13, under the theme "Engage, Empower, Elevate: Working Together to Improve Health and Well-being for All."

CPS said that many cancers are linked to lifestyles developed as people mature, but changes to poor dietary practices and a lack of physical activity can greatly improve health outcomes and overall wellness. The department encourages residents to consult with family physicians or health organizations to learn more about healthy living and to take action to improve their well-being.

The call comes as the burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

continues to grow across the Caribbean. NCDs such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and diabetes account for more than 75% of all deaths in the region. According to CPS, this represents one of the most significant public health and economic challenges facing Caribbean societies.

Unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, tobacco use, and excessive alcohol consumption have fuelled the crisis. The high prevalence of NCDs strains healthcare systems that are often ill-equipped to manage chronic illnesses, hindering progress toward universal health coverage. Beyond the human toll, NCDs also carry steep financial costs. The region loses between 1.36% and 8% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) each year due to healthcare expenses and reduced productivity caused by absenteeism, disability, and premature death.

CPS noted that NCDs are a pressing concern in Sint Maarten. Through its annual Health Observance Calendar, the department highlights Caribbean Wellness Day while raising awareness about local health issues such as hypertension, diabetes, and prostate and breast cancer.

CPS is also encouraging residents to get involved in promoting health and wellness in their neighbourhoods, stressing that influencing positive lifestyle changes is possible by working together to improve both community and individual health.

Caribbean Wellness Day was established by CARICOM Heads of Government during a summit on chronic diseases in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in 2007. It is observed every year on the second Saturday of September.

## Dutch doctor banned from giving experimental stem cell treatment

AMSTERDAM--A 51-year-old anaesthetist in Veldhoven has been ordered to stop giving experimental umbilical cord blood transfusions to children and adults after carrying out the procedures without a licence, broadcaster NOS reported on Thursday.

The health inspectorate IGJ claims he had treated around 200 children and 20 adults over the past two years, mostly in hotel rooms near Veldhoven, NOS said.

The therapy, which the doctor claimed could cure autism and cerebral palsy, is not part of standard healthcare in the Netherlands and has not been proven effective. In the Netherlands, umbilical

cord blood transfusions only take place in university hospitals, and then only in limited cases such as the treatment of leukaemia.

The IGJ began an investigation at the end of 2024 after receiving reports that transfusions with cord blood were being carried out in the Netherlands. The man was linked to a Swiss healthcare provider with clinics in several countries and used supplies from a cord blood bank in Slovakia. Most of his patients came from abroad, with only five from the Netherlands.

The inspectorate said patients were told the treatment was experimental, but stressed the

doctor had no permit to carry it out. Inspectors also found a used bag of cord blood stored in a fridge at one of the two Brabant dental practices where the man works as a freelance anaesthetist, though it is unclear if treatments took place there.

The doctor, named in Dutch media as Jens Fischer, told Omroep Brabant he is convinced of the treatment's effectiveness and said he hoped to resume in the future. "We are working to do it the way the inspectorate wants. I find it strange that we are not allowed to do this. A lot of research has been done. Children waiting for this therapy are disappointed now," he said.

The IGJ said it will monitor whether he really halts all procedures. As long as its investigation continues, it will not provide further details.



From left: Dwight Williams – Treasurer/Vice-President; Jose Verschuere-Sommers – Co-Founder/General Director; Felisha Aakster – Secretary; Sahar Thomson – Island Team Lead, Strengthening Families Together and Digital Innovation; Ludmila Duncan – Co-Director (virtually from the Netherlands); Leonaris Lloyd – President; Ashma Berkel – Office Manager, NPOwer Coordination; Krish Budhrani – Board Member; Rajesh Chintaman – Former Co-Director and Project Team Member. Not in picture: Kevin "Suppa" Petrona.

## Foresee Foundation reshapes board, welcomes new members

PHILIPSBURG--Foresee Foundation has announced changes to its leadership, naming new board members and strengthening its team as the organization enters a new phase of governance and growth.

Felisha Aakster has been appointed Secretary, while Dwight Williams will serve as Treasurer and Vice-President. Aakster has worked extensively in non-formal education, youth engagement, and programme development in St. Maarten, the wider Dutch Caribbean, and the Netherlands. Williams brings more than 19 years of experience in the financial sector on St. Maarten and now works as a Financial Consultant specializing in banking, institutional financing, and ac-

counting policies.

The Foundation also announced Ludmila Duncan as the new Co-Director of the Executive Board. Based in the Netherlands, Duncan will represent Foresee internationally while supporting St. Maarten's NGO sector. A former Member of Parliament and experienced consultant and researcher, she is expected to help expand the Foundation's regional and global reach.

At the staff level, Ashma Berkel has joined to manage the office and provide logistical support for the NPOwer programme and other initiatives. The Foundation describes her as a passionate advocate for its most vulnerable in society. Meanwhile, young St. Maarten professional Sahar

Thomson has been appointed Island Team Lead for the Strengthening Families Together programme, a three-year collaboration with Curaçao and Aruba in partnership with Oranje Fonds and Stichting Kinderpostzegels. Thomson will also support digital innovation across Foresee's projects.

The Foundation thanked Rajesh Chintaman, who recently ended nearly four years of service with the organisation, and expressed appreciation to all former board members for their contributions.

With its new board structure and expanded team, Foresee Foundation says it is positioned to continue its mission of empowering civil society through innovative and inclusive programming.

## Addictive spice vapes popular among teens

AMSTERDAM--Illegal THC vapes are becoming more popular among teenagers and many unwittingly buy vapes containing extremely addictive synthetic cannabis, or spice, Dutch current affairs programme Zembla reported.

A probe by the programme showed that some teens at schools and care institutions in Amsterdam, The Hague and Noord-Brabant became ill after using the spice vapes. Some fainted or vomited and others had to be admitted to hospital.

Spice is many times more addictive than THC, and even a little can lead to dizziness, hallucinations, arrhythmia and vomiting. The substance is similar to regular cannabis but according to

addiction centre Jellinek, it is difficult to determine the dosage, which makes the effect hard to predict.

Illegal vapes are easily available from social media apps, such as Snapchat and Instagram. This week, consumer watchdog ACM opened an investigation into Snapchat for allowing the large-scale illegal sale of vapes to minors, in breach of European legislation.

Most teens think they are dealing with regular THC, Zembla journalist Evelien Vehof told broadcaster NOS, but all THC vapes analysed by Zembla turned out to contain synthetic cannabis.

The user group is still relatively small but large enough for Amsterdam regional health board and the Jell-

inek clinic to raise the alarm. Youth organisations, particularly those dealing with 13 to 16-year-olds, have been warned about the health risks of THC vapes, with and without spice.

According to Dutch law, vapes can only be sold to adults and must contain only tobacco. Flavourings and other substances are banned, and vapes containing THC are banned under the Dutch opium law.

Apart from spice and THC, illegal vapes have also been found to contain lead and other toxic heavy metals. A campaign to warn teenagers against the dangers of illegal vapes has been ongoing since May.

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USM community members wearing yellow ribbons.



USM community members with their yellow ribbons.

## University shows solidarity on World Suicide Prevention Day

POND ISLAND--The University of St. Martin (USM) community came together on September 10 to observe World Suicide Prevention Day.

Students, staff, and faculty wore yellow ribbons throughout the day as a visible sign of solidarity and a reminder that compassionate conversations can save lives.

“Creating a culture where it’s safe to speak up is everyone’s responsibility,” said USM President Dr.

Antonio Carmona Báez. “By wearing yellow, we reaffirm that no one at USM has to struggle alone and that reaching out is a powerful first step.”

As part of its ongoing commitment to student well-being, USM will continue to promote mental health awareness, peer support and pathways to care throughout the academic year. Students, staff and faculty also have access to the services of USM counsellor Carole Joseph, who

provides confidential support.

USM also encourages the wider St. Maarten community to take this moment as a reminder that help is available and that no one needs to face struggles alone. Reaching out to a friend, family member or professional can make a life-saving difference.

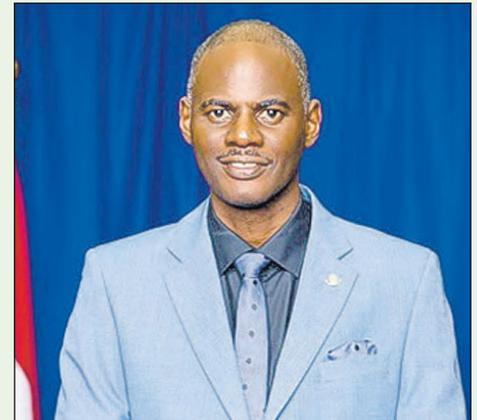
“Together, we can break the silence, fight stigma, and show that every life matters,” USM said.

## Centenarians, seniors to be honoured at Int’l. Day of the Elderly celebrations

PHILIPSBURG--Some members of the elderly community will be at the centre of celebrations on October 1, 2025, when the Ministry of Public Health, Social Development and Labour VSA marks International Day of the Elderly.

The observance will include the recognition of three centenarians, who will receive gifts in honour of their extraordinary lives and legacy, and a Celebration Dinner at the historic Emilio’s Restaurant for about 200 guests, 95 per cent of whom will be seniors. The dinner will highlight and honour those who have made significant contributions to St. Maarten’s development and society.

Invitations to the celebration dinner will be distributed through the Community Help Desks in Cole Bay, Dutch Quarter, St. Peters, and Hope Estate. Seniors must present valid identification when registering, and invitations



VSA Minister Richinel Brug

will be issued on a first-come, first-served basis. The Help Desks are open daily from 8:30am to 12:30pm and from 1:30pm to 4:30pm.

Minister of VSA, Richinel Brug, shared his vision for the occasion. “Our seniors are the foundation of our society, and it is our duty to ensure that they age with dignity and respect. The week of activities is not only a celebration of their lives and contri-

butions, but also a step toward building a sustainable framework that safeguards their future. I encourage our community to participate, honour our elders, and help us create a society where seniors feel valued, supported, and included.”

The Ministry of VSA invites the entire community to join in recognizing and celebrating St. Maarten’s seniors on this important day.

## VACANCY

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**One position:  
Pastry Chef**

Vacancy number: VAC-11218

**Requirements:**

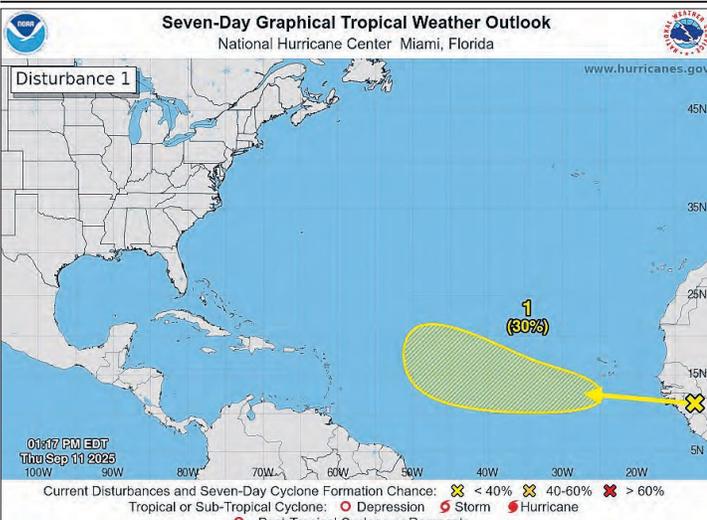
- Must have a specialized certificate for the function of Pastry Chef
- Must be able to prepare variety of desserts, meal prep, bake bread and other pastries for more savory dishes, maintain kitchen equipment, manage ingredient stocks, and ensure compliance with health and safety standards.

**Salary and benefits:**

- XCG 1883, -
- SZV insurance

All interested candidates MUST submit their application to the National Employment Service Center (NESC) via [apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org) within two weeks to the attention of Employment Service Center.

The application should include an application letter, a copy of identification, copy of diplomas, and/or certificates, where required. All suitable applicants will be contacted for an interview to be held with a Representative of the business and a Business Service Officer representing NESC. All applications with aforementioned documents must also be sent to: [shiekassxm@gmail.com](mailto:shiekassxm@gmail.com)



A tropical wave is forecast to emerge offshore of west Africa by Friday. Environmental conditions could support some slow development of this system over the weekend and into early next week while the wave moves toward the west or west-north-west at 10 to 15 mph over the eastern and central tropical Atlantic. The cyclone formation chance was low through both 48 hours (near 0 %) and seven days (30%).

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 Cg. 57.60  
**\$32.00**



The four ministers

## Agreements on detention

Continued from page 1.

Maarten currently faces. "If necessary, we can send staff from our services to provide support," said Dowers.

"Thanks to our colleagues from Aruba, who have offered assistance," said St. Maarten's Minister of Justice Nathalie Tackling. Tackling hopes St. Maarten can assist other countries in the same way once the new prison is built in 2028.

The biannual JVO focuses on cooperation on challenges in the Caribbean and the European part of the Kingdom. Key themes include subversive crime, staff shortages and the increase in violence, including firearms.

Other themes include mi-

gration, the exchange and protection of personal data, and improved representation of Caribbean Dutch citizens in justice organisations such as the Prosecutor's Office and the High Court.

The countries are working together to find and retain sufficient staff, and organised a job fair, among other things. Hato mentioned agreements not to cut back on justice personnel during reforms.

Unfortunately, Aruba has made staff cuts following the coronavirus pandemic as part of agreements with the Netherlands, said Dowers. The prison is also facing staff shortages due to longer

prison sentences. Electronic detention and alternative punishments should alleviate this.

Dutch caretaker Minister Foort van Oosten, who took over Justice and Security just six days earlier, said the Netherlands also faces a staff shortage. "I recognise the problems in other countries. You can't solve that overnight. There are too many vacancies and too few people. But during the JVO we also met online with people who are training to become prosecutors on the islands," he added.

The topic of subversive crime requires a more in-depth discussion, the ministers said. The theme will be discussed at a strategic session in St. Maarten in January during the next JVO. "We're going to look at what exactly 'subversive' means for the different countries," said Tackling.

The countries also want to share experiences on one of their biggest concerns: increased gun possession and violence. "This also undermines the rule of law. In the coming period, we will be focusing on how these firearms enter our country," added Tackling.

Finally, the JVO was also used to formally terminate the guardianship arrangement. Under this arrangement, when children moved from the islands to the European Netherlands, they were assigned a Dutch guardian, regardless of whether child protection services were involved. This arrangement is outdated. Therefore, the four ministers signed a decree to terminate such.

All in all, the ministers reflected positively on this JVO. "I note that the willingness to cooperate in the field of justice has intensified. It is not a Kingdom matter, but there is intensive cooperation within the Kingdom in this area. I also see a growing interest among the Dutch partners in gaining more insight and knowledge about the islands. I see more understanding," concluded Dowers.

## JetBlue to launch new nonstop flights from Fort Lauderdale to St. Maarten

PHILIPSBURG--St. Maarten is among nine new destinations JetBlue will begin serving nonstop from Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport (FLL) this winter, the airline announced on Wednesday.

The service, which starts on December 4, 2025, will operate four times a week year-round, marking JetBlue's return to the SXM-FLL route and expanding travel options for both residents and visitors.

JetBlue said the new flights are part of its largest-ever schedule out of Fort Lauderdale, where it will soon reach 113 daily departures to 46 nonstop destinations. Alongside St. Maarten, the expansion includes new routes to Aruba, Cartagena, Grand Cayman, Liberia (Costa Rica), San Pedro Sula, Cali, New Orleans, and Pittsburgh.

"As the top airline in Fort Lauderdale, with more departures than any other carrier on peak travel days, JetBlue is

proud to keep raising the bar for customers in South Florida and to continue bringing them to the places they want to go," said Dave Jehn, the airline's vice president of network planning and partnerships.

For St. Maarten, the move strengthens its airlift from South Florida, one of the island's largest U.S. source markets. The connection also offers more convenience for Caribbean travelers connecting through Fort Lauderdale to JetBlue's growing network in Latin America and the United States.

Airport officials in Fort Lauderdale welcomed the development. "With the addition of seven international and two domestic routes from FLL, this gives South Floridians more convenient and cost-effective ways to visit and enjoy these cities, whether traveling for business or leisure," said Mark E. Gale, CEO/Director of Aviation at FLL.

The new Fort Lauderdale-St. Maarten service is already available for booking on JetBlue's website and mobile app. To celebrate its expanded Fort Lauderdale schedule, the airline is offering special fares starting at US \$113 or less to destinations served nonstop from FLL.

JetBlue has been steadily increasing its Caribbean presence, with added flights to San Juan, Cancun, Kingston, Punta Cana, and Santiago also announced this week. The carrier will open a dedicated Mint® in-flight crew member base in Fort Lauderdale in early 2026 to support the expansion.

With the return of nonstop flights from Fort Lauderdale, St. Maarten's tourism sector gains another boost heading into the peak season, enhancing the island's connectivity and appeal for visitors seeking easier access from the U.S. mainland.

## Three men convicted

Continued from page 1.

for continued efforts from all sides of society to break the cycle of illegal firearms and violence," the Prosecutor's Office OM SXM said in a press release, calling the matter a reminder of the dangers posed by the normalisation of illegal firearm possession. The office is reviewing the verdict to determine whether to appeal.

During the trial in late September, prosecutors had called for sentences of eight to 14 years, arguing that the men were responsible for Scott's death.

Court testimony and surveillance footage showed that the confrontation had begun with a heated argument inside the club, allegedly over stolen car parts. Witnesses said one defendant had loaded a pistol and taunted Scott, telling him, "You think you better than us? We going show you what it is. Come outside."

Footage played in court showed the men waiting outside as the club closed. When Scott attempted to leave on his scooter, one defendant provoked him again, calling him a "punk" and daring him to stop.

Gunshots followed, after which Scott fled, crashed his scooter, and was later shot at again before collapsing on the roadside. He died at St. Maarten Medical Center about 90 minutes later.

The three defendants admitted firing guns, but claimed Scott had been the aggressor. One testified that Scott had reached for a weapon first, saying, "Before that night, me and Tion never had no altercation." Another said he had feared Scott would shoot, citing rumours Scott had killed a man before.

M., the third defendant, told the court he had panicked and fired into the air after failing to climb a wall because his pants were "too tight."

However, prosecutors argued that none of the men had acted in self-defence. Forensic tests confirmed that four guns had been fired during the incident, and gunshot residue was found on Scott's hands. The Prosecutor's Office said it is analysing the court's decision to determine whether there are grounds to file an appeal.

## VACANCY

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**One position:**  
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Vacancy number: VAC-11219

**Requirements:**

- Must have at least 1 year experience working as an Air Conditioning technician
- Must speak English

**Salary and benefits:**

- XCG 2,610, -
- SZV insurance

All interested candidates MUST submit their application to the National Employment Service Center (NESC) via [apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:apply.nesc@sintmaartengov.org) within two weeks to the attention of Employment Service Center. The application should include an application letter, a copy of identification, copy of diplomas, and/or certificates, where required.

All suitable applicants will be contacted for an interview to be held with a Representative of the business and a Business Service Officer representing NESC. All applications with aforementioned documents must also be sent to: [greehomesxm@gmail.com](mailto:greehomesxm@gmail.com)

### St. Maarten sees 16.9% growth

*Continued from page 1.*

and does not differentiate between residents and non-residents.

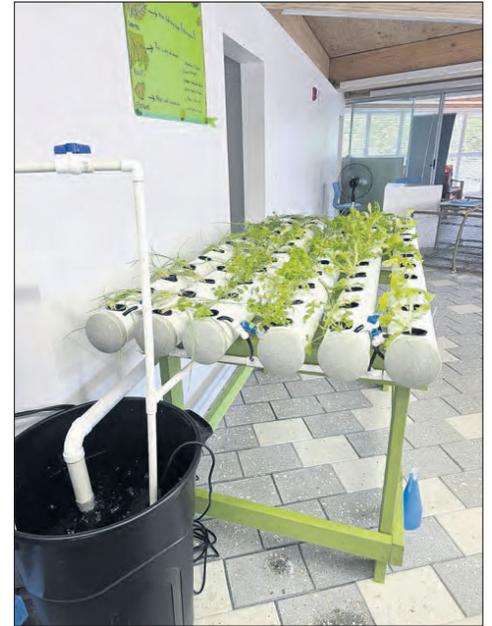
Although the methodologies differ, the adjusted 2024 estimate (using a deduction of 10% accounting for St. Maarten residents) provides a reasonable benchmark for approximate comparison. Without such an adjustment, only the total number of visitor arrivals in 2025 could be presented, without the context of growth figures or year-over-year changes.

Given the above-mentioned, STAT said St. Maarten had recorded 209,876 airport passenger arrivals in Q2 2025. This represents a 16.9% increase compared to 179,552 for the same period in 2024. "This growth underscores the improved accuracy and reliability of arrival records, which are now based on consistently applied criteria that exclude St. Maarten

residents, transit passengers, and transfer passengers. STAT uses these figures as the official benchmark for passenger movements through Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA)," STAT said.

The cruise sector also posted similar results in Q2 2025. Preliminary data show that 236,391 cruise passengers arrived between April and June 2025, an increase of 14% compared to the 207,428 recorded during the same quarter in 2024. This growth underscores St. Maarten's position as a thriving port of call in the Caribbean.

"Together, both air and cruise tourism indicators highlight a healthy and growing industry. Passenger movements provide insight into overall visitor traffic through the airport, while cruise arrivals reinforce St. Maarten's strength as a hub for day visitors."



*A section of Oceana Innovation Hub in Carlisle Bay, in Barbados.*

# Minister Gumbs visits innovation hub in Barbados, explores youth-led innovation

PHILIPSBURG--Minister of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Melissa Gumbs visited Oceana Innovation Hub in Carlisle Bay, Barbados, on August 29 to observe youth-led educational initiatives and explore opportunities for regional collaboration.

She was accompanied by her Chief of Staff and welcomed by Hub Director Ché Greenidge, who guided the delegation through the facility's state-of-the-art learning spaces.

During the visit, Gumbs reviewed the creative outputs of the Hub's inaugural summer programme, which concluded earlier in August. The programme brought children into an environment combining science, technology and environmental stewardship, emphasising hands-on learning. On display were models created by participants, including solar-powered cars and a functioning aquaponics system.

Greenidge highlighted

the students' energy and enthusiasm, explaining how the interactive setting "transformed learning into an eagerly anticipated adventure." Gumbs said that such experiences reinforce the importance of creating opportunities for young people to engage with complex subjects in accessible and engaging ways.

Reflecting on the visit, Gumbs said, "The excitement that radiates from this type of programme is exactly what inspires young

people to think differently about their future. When children are given the tools and the freedom to innovate, they not only learn, but they also begin to lead."

Discussions during the visit included the potential for St. Maarten students to participate in future activities at the Hub, while Barbadian students could engage with St. Maarten Nature Foundation. Gumbs emphasised that cross-island exchanges strengthen the Caribbean's cultural ties and collective resilience.

Launched earlier this year, Oceana Innovation Hub aims to serve as a regional model for experiential education, integrating classroom learning with real-world exploration in areas such as renewable energy, aquaculture, marine life conservation, and climate change. By combining theory with practice, the Hub encourages students to develop innovative solutions to contemporary challenges.

Gumbs' visit also underscored St. Maarten's commitment to educational innovation and regional collaboration. It coincided with the conclusion of her participation in Carifesta, a week-long celebration of Caribbean culture where she highlighted that education, creativity, and innovation remain central to the region's development.

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## AANKONDIGING

Bij exploit dd. **12e september 2025**, afschrift waarvan is gelaten aan de Officier van Justitie op St. Maarten, heb ik, Solange M. Apon deurwaarder op St. Maarten, alhier, ten verzoeken van

**Joyce Patricia Watson-Richardson**, wonende op St. Maarten, aan

**Maurits Joslyn Richardson** en **Agnes Cornelia Richardson**, wonende op St. Maarten,

BETEKEND, een beroepschrift Schorsing Ten Uitvoerlegging dd. 6e augustus 2025 in de zaak; Joyce Patricia Watson Richardson tegen Ardwell Milgjen Richard Irion & Brian Gregory Rudy Irion **SXM 2025 -H-58**  
**EJ 427/2024**  
**SXM 2024-1464**

De deurwaarder  
Solange M. Apon

## Law on passenger data submission

*Continued from page 1.*

time sector. The initiative will enable yachting agents to access secure portals for real-time decisions on entry and vessel clearance, which Baly said will enhance the visitor experience.

Further efforts are being made through public-private partnerships with Port Sint Maarten to create a more efficient home-porting process. A new system will allow passenger data collected at Princess Juliana International Airport to be used for vessel clearance at the port, streamlining operations.

Additionally, mobile inland control units will be

upgraded to integrate entry and stay data with residence application tracking, ensuring stronger follow-up and continuity beyond points of entry.

On the issue of law enforcement, Baly announced that 1.5 million guilders for new vehicles have been allocated to the St. Maarten Police Force KPSM in the 2025 Capital Expenditures budget. Refurbishment of police facilities is planned through the National Recovery Program Bureau, and upgrades to digital infrastructure are expected.

"The aim is to revitalise the Force through targeted re-

recruitment and strengthened partnerships with regional police forces," Baly said. He stressed that tackling crime cannot be achieved by enforcement alone, noting that youth crime, labour law gaps, and challenges at public events highlight the need for coordinated approaches.

According to Baly, "strengthening cooperation both between ministries and with civil society organisations is essential." He said government will foster inter-ministerial collaboration through joint strategies, structured information-sharing and aligned policies, as part of efforts to achieve sustainable safety and long-term social stability.

**KEEP ST. MAARTEN CLEAN!**





Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset members posed with members of the Louis Constant Fleming Hospital Maternity Ward at the presentation of the 50 maternity baskets to the Maternity Ward.



Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset President Alex Pierre and Service Projects Chair Jamila Boivard pose with Louis Constant Fleming Hospital nurses and the first expecting mother to receive a basket at the presentation of the 50 maternity baskets to the Maternity Ward.

## Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset gives 100 maternity baskets to support new mothers

CONCORDIA/CAY HILL- Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset continued its strong commitment to maternal and child health by distributing 100 maternity baskets to new and expecting mothers at the hospitals on both the Dutch and French sides of the island.

The club said the initiative, carried out during the months of July and August, reflects its dedication to supporting vulnerable families and strengthening partnerships with local healthcare institutions.

The first distribution took place at St. Maarten Medical Center (Dutch side), followed by the second at Centre Hospitalier Louis-Constant Fleming (French side), with each hospital receiving 50 baskets.

The baskets, filled with essential items for newborns and mothers, were donated

to assist families in need as they begin their journey into parenthood.

In addition to the hospital distributions, the club also had the privilege of personally presenting baskets to two expectant mothers, one on each side of the island, symbolising the project's direct impact on families in the community.

"Maternal and child health is one of Rotary's key areas of focus, and as a club we remain committed to making a positive impact in our community," said Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset President Alex Plierre. "By donating these baskets, we hope to ease the transition for mothers in need and remind them that they are supported by their community."

The club said the distribution on the French side further allowed members to

connect with nurses, doctors and hospital administrators, leading to constructive dialogue about future collaboration. The club expressed its enthusiasm about the possibility of working closely with the hospital's managing director on upcoming health-related initiatives.

Rotary Club of St. Martin Sunset also extended heartfelt thanks to its community partners, particularly Divo, Nagico and St. Maarten Nectar, whose contribution made this year's distribution possible.

"This initiative exemplifies Rotary's motto of 'Service Above Self' by ensuring that families, regardless of which side of the island they reside on, receive the care, encouragement and support they deserve at such a critical stage in life," according to a press release.

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Personnel during work stoppage.

## Ambulance service director sent home

WILLEMSTAD--Following the official announcement of Alwin Keli's departure as interim director of "Fundashon Kuido di Ambulans Kòrsou" (FKAK), he told the Amigoe newspaper that he was completely surprised by the Supervisory Board's decision.

"I was, of course, very surprised. I didn't see this coming at all," said Keli. "The original date set by the Supervisory Board was October 1st. A replacement would be appointed, and I would train this person for a month. I had the feeling we were working towards a consensus."

Nevertheless, the board, in consultation with government, decided to terminate

Keli's employment with immediate effect – on September 10th.

According to Prime Minister Gilmar Pisas, this decision was made based on the urgent situation within the organization. A new interim director was appointed, but the name has not yet been released.

The sudden dismissal is the direct result of government's intervention following persistent unrest among staff. Pisas and the Minister of Public Health Javier Sylvania (both MFK) took action following a strike by FKAK employees, who walked off their jobs out of dissatisfaction with the situation within the organisation.

Keli expressed his disappointment with the course

of events: "At such a moment, you feel abandoned. Apparently, the truth is no longer important."

He believes it is worrying that personnel seem to set the tone when it comes to replacing managers: "The fact that they decide when a manager is replaced and that everything is used to do so is a serious issue."

Regarding the situation within the FKAK, Keli said much remains to be done. "FKAK has a lot of issues that need to be addressed and resolved. If everyone isn't on the same page, it will be difficult to implement major changes."

Despite the disappointment, Keli wishes his successor the best: "I wish them strength and wisdom."

During an emergency meeting with the Curaçao Union of Nursing Personnel CBV, the prime minister stated that the Supervisory Board had been asked to intervene. That same day, the board decided not to wait until October.

Sylvania indicated that the new management is temporary and the application process for a permanent director will open soon.

According to him, the appointment of staff also needs to be formalised. FKAK employees have been waiting three years for the completion of a process that will officially qualify them as civil servants.

CBV, led by president Analiza Soares-Mathilda, expressed its appreciation for government's steps but emphasised that these were only taken after prolonged pressure from staff. Ambulance crews had gone on strike Wednesday morning and then went to Fort Amsterdam to appeal to the Council of Ministers.

## Aruba submits a draft kingdom dispute law

THE HAGUE--Aruba's Prime Minister Mike Eman on Thursday submitted a draft Kingdom Law on Dispute Resolution to the Dutch Second Chamber of Parliament (House of Representatives). The proposal gives the Council of State the role of arbiter, with its rulings binding for all countries within the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

The initiative fulfils a commitment made in 2010, when at Aruba's request the Kingdom Charter was amended to include the creation of a mechanism to resolve legal disputes between the countries of the Kingdom, primarily between the Netherlands and one or more of its Caribbean partners. At the time, it

was explicitly intended that an independent institution such as the High Court in The Hague would take on this role, and that its judgments would be binding.

However, in subsequent negotiations the Dutch government backed away from that commitment, insisting on retaining the final say through its dominance in the Kingdom Council of Ministers RMR. Despite strong pressure from the Inter-Parliamentary Kingdom Consultation IPKO, successive Dutch cabinets refused to give ground.

Former Home Affairs and Kingdom Relations BZK Minister Ronald Plasterk even crafted his own dispute resolution law, which

diverged significantly from what the countries had agreed upon in 2010.

That proposal was eventually withdrawn by Dutch State Secretary Raymond Knops when it became clear the First Chamber (Senate) would reject it due to objections from Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten. The responsibility then fell to the Parliaments of the three Caribbean countries to develop a new proposal.

Thursday's submission via Eman, accompanied by letters of approval from the Parliaments of Aruba, Curaçao and St. Maarten, signals that the Caribbean partners have succeeded in bringing forward their own united proposal.



Spectators

## CTB touts media coverage CNSJF

WILLEMSTAD--The recent Curaçao North Sea Jazz Festival (CNSJF) was promoted "across all key markets" by the Curaçao Tourist Board (CTB), in close collaboration with organisers "Fundashon Bon Intenshon" and MOJO. They hosted 29 members of the press and influencers from abroad to cover the musical event.

According to TB, these efforts resulted in excellent exposure for Curaçao in prestigious online publication such as Forbes and People Magazine, with both articles reaching millions of readers. They highlighted what makes CNSJF unique, the world-class artist line-up of 2025, and the island's beauty as the ideal backdrop for the festival.

Curaçao also gained further visibility through the artists themselves, who

shared electrifying videos of their performances.

In its article, Forbes recounted the journalist's personal experience of both Curaçao and the festival, presenting five reasons why CNSJF is a must-visit. Among the highlights were Curaçao's beauty, its language, the diverse line-up of artists at the festival and the wide range of cuisine available.

The People Magazine feature, which reached an audience of over 10 million, highlighted the destination, festival activations and headlining performances, ultimately recognising the event as a "world-class festival experience". Both articles were accompanied by colourful and spectacular images, added CTB.

They invited a total of 29 international press repre-

sentatives and influencers to cover CNSJF from the United States, Colombia, Suriname, Venezuela, Brazil, Chile, the Netherlands, Aruba, Jamaica and Germany. The journalists represented outlets including Radio Caracol, 103.9 FM Mas Musica, O Globo, UOL, Venevisión, Circuito Radial X89FM, Circuito Lider FM, CNN en Español, TVN Chile, Canal 90, STVS, Radio 10, Supreme TV, Hollywood Reporter, Refinery 29 Somos, People Magazine, Cool Jazz, MusikWoche, Villa D'Arte, JFK and Edge 105FM.

CTB congratulated "Fundashon Bon Intenshon" on delivering another high-level edition of CNSJF and looks forward to the announcement of the artist line-up for 2026.

## Ripped-off foreign workers struggle to get rightful pay

AMSTERDAM--It is almost impossible for foreign workers who have been short-changed by their employers to get their money, figures from aid organisation Fairwork have shown.

From the 131 reports of outstanding wages the organisation received over 2022, 2023 and 2024, none have led to the employers giving the workers what is owed them, a spokesman for Fairwork told Dutch newspaper the Volkskrant.

Amounts can vary from "between 300 euros to sometimes 10,000 euros," he said.

According to a spokeswoman for the inspectorate, recovering outstanding wages is not a priority although most of the cases are "still being investigated". "Fining a company that is employing 30 illegal workers is more effective than helping individual workers chase their money," she said, adding that the way for workers to get their money is to take the employer to court.

According to Fairwork, that is a "short-sighted approach" as procedures are costly and time-consuming. "The inspectorate cannot tackle excesses without reports. It is difficult enough to get exploited workers to file a complaint and if that doesn't get them anywhere they will not bother, the spokesman said.

There are some 850,000 foreign workers in the Netherlands. Most do low-skilled and low-paid jobs and depend on their employer for accommodation. Many don't speak the language and have no idea of their rights.

Yuliia Ravliuk who is owned 1,200 euros by a tulip grower in Nieuw-Vennep, told the paper she was always paid 200 euros to 300 euros less than specified in her contract. "And in the end, they withheld my wages for two months," she said.

Fairwork wants a single designated office for duped workers to report complaints about withheld payments.

# Youth trauma and mental health study launched for Caribbean Netherlands



A screen-capture of the promotional video for the "Be You" youth mental health study for the Caribbean Netherlands, which recently launched in Bonaire.

KRALENDIJK--A large-scale scientific study which looks into trauma experiences and mental health among young people in the Caribbean Netherlands was launched on Thursday, September 11, starting with Bonaire. The study is called "Be You", emphasising that it focuses on young people themselves: their experiences, feelings, and voice. It is an initiative of Mental Health Caribbean (MHC), Amsterdam University Medical Center (UMC), and Expertisecentrum Onderwijszorg (EOZ) ("Center of expertise for educational care"), and was announced on the launch-date by MHC.

It will run through October 19 in secondary schools and tertiary vocational education (MBO) on Bonaire.

MHC has been conducting scientific research into trauma since 2022, the or-

## Arrest after chase, ammunition found

WILLEMSTAD--Police arrested a 21-year-old motorist in the early hours of Wednesday following a chase on Cabo Verdeweg. The man was found to have ammunition in his vehicle.

According to police, the driver sped off when officers attempted to stop him. After a short pursuit, the vehicle was brought to a halt near Ser'i Papaya.

During the inspection, officers discovered a quantity of ammunition, which was seized on the spot. The suspect was immediately taken into custody.

Later that day, the Organised Crime Division conducted a search of his home in Mahuma, where additional ammunition was found. The man remains in detention pending further investigation.

nators. If young people experience something that triggers emotions while completing the questionnaire, help will be offered immediately.

Care providers from the "Be You" project are available to support them. However, previous scientific research shows that young people generally do not experience these types of assessments as burdensome.

On the contrary, being able to talk about it breaks a taboo and often makes them feel less alone. They appreciate being able to share their opinions, says MHC.

All responses will remain anonymous, securely stored in a secure environment, and cannot be linked to individual young people. Participation is entirely voluntary. Although participation is not mandatory, the researchers encourage participation, as the results are valuable for supporting future generations.

The questionnaires will be administered not only on Bonaire, but also on Saba and St. Eustatius. The Windward Islands will be administered later this year. The results of the study will be shared with the Government of Bonaire, the partners in health care, the schools, as well as with parents and the youngsters themselves in the first part of 2026.

For an impression of the project, look up the "Be You" video on the "Mental Health Caribbean" YouTube page (in Papiamentu, with Dutch subtitles).



MP organised the protest.

# Demonstration for respect and peace

WILLEMSTAD--Political party "Movimentu Kousa Promé" (MKP) held a demonstration on Wednesday titled "Kòrsou zona di pas" (Curaçao peace zone). It took place from 5:00pm to 7:00pm at Wilhelmina Park in Punda.

Organisers declared that Curaçao stands for respect, freedom, and peace. They

emphasised respect for Venezuela's sovereignty and for international treaties and laws.

During the gathering demonstration, points of opposition were also raised. For example, criticism was levelled at the Netherlands' alleged consent to allow the United States to use Curaçao for aggression and war purposes, as well as the tacit consent of the

Pisas III Cabinet and the Parliament, which was elected by the people.

Furthermore, the protesters argued that the raw materials gas, oil, gold and columbite-tantalite (coltan) are Venezuelan property and not American or Dutch. A protest sign called on Curaçaoleaneans to open their eyes and pay attention to these issues.

# Tourist tax in Curaçao

WILLEMSTAD--A new tourist tax will soon be introduced in Curaçao, with revenues earmarked for environmental protection, tourism development and an increase in the old age AOV pensions. Governor Lucille George-Wout announced this on behalf of the Pisas III Cabinet during Tuesday's opening of a new legislative year.

Finance Minister Javier Sylvania also presented the 2026 budget to Parliament. Government aims to reduce the national debt to 55% of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), which it says will create space to invest in both the economy and society.

According to the Council of Ministers, future growth should come from diversify-

ing into new sectors, boosting local production and strengthening small- and medium-sized enterprises. Agriculture, fisheries and livestock farming are expected to play a larger role in supplying the hospitality industry, while exports and sustainable energy projects will also receive fresh support.

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## Justin Riley returned to His Majesty's prison in Anguilla

ANGUILLA--The Royal Anguilla Police Force (RAPF) confirms that, in close collaboration with French counterparts, His Majesty's Prison, and the Immigration Department, escapee Justin Skerritt-Riley has been safely repatriated to Anguilla. Upon arrival, Riley underwent a medical examination and has since been returned to the secure custody of His Majesty's Prison. The RAPF acknowledges the coordinated efforts of all agencies involved in ensuring his safe return and reaffirms its ongoing commitment to public safety and the rule of law.

Riley had escaped from lawful custody on July 29, while on a prison escort from the prison to the Princess Alexandra Hospital. A search was started and he was recaptured by French Police in Saint-Martin on Tuesday, August 5, and subsequently transferred by the French Authorities to a prison in Guadeloupe pending further legal steps. Governor Julia Crouch submitted a request to the French Authorities in Paris seeking Skerritt-Riley's return to Anguilla to stand trial.

The Governor also commissioned an independent investigation into the circumstances of the escape and a senior member of the UK Prison service was in Anguilla to conduct the investigation. She said that the report identifies a series of recommendations for urgent improvements to in-

ternal security procedures and practices at the prison. She said she has discussed the recommendations with the prison superintendent who has been fully supportive of the review. Senior prison officers will be working to implement the recommendations and will report to the governor's office as a top priority in the coming weeks.

Riley's arrest followed a shooting incident at Rock Farm on July 15. The RAPF laid multiple charges against him including possession of a firearm, causing grievous bodily harm, attempted murder, trespass with intent to inflict grievous bodily harm, possession of ammunition, discharge of a firearm and unlawful assault.



Derelict and abandoned vehicles in Charlestown, Nevis

## NIA Moves to Crush and Export Derelict Vehicles

CHARLESTOWN NEVIS--The Nevis Island Administration (NIA) has announced plans to launch a major initiative to remove derelict vehicles across the island, tackling concerns related to public health, safety, and the environment.

Premier of Nevis, Mark Brantley, said the Administration will fund the removal of abandoned vehicles, which will then be transported to a designated site for crushing and eventual export.

"We have contracted with someone who has brought in the equipment who will crush those vehicles and we will export the metal," he explained.

The premier noted that abandoned vehicles have been a longstanding issue, often left scattered on properties, around communities, and even on public roads.

"We have recognised that many people have these cars scattered around the yard, scattered around the

neighbourhood, sometimes parked on the public road, and impeding traffic. We will use the tools available to the government by law to get those vehicles moved."

The cleanup effort is also being driven by mounting security and health concerns. According to the premier, law enforcement has raised alarms about abandoned cars being in the furtherance of criminal activity. Health officials have similarly warned that the vehicles serve as breeding grounds for pests and disease.

"The police have complained that these derelict vehicles around Nevis are used often to hide contraband, to hide weapons, and the health department has complained that these vehicles are breeding grounds for rodents, for roaches, and for vectors like mosquitoes.

"It is in our interest, from a cleanliness point of view, from a health point of view, from a security point of view,

and certainly from an aesthetic point of view, to clean up Nevis," he said.

Brantley further pointed out that with the growing number of vehicles being imported to Nevis, the problem of derelict cars is likely to worsen. He revealed that on a recent occasion, as many as 50 vehicles had arrived in a single day at Long Point, and noted that ships bringing in vehicles now come several times per month.

He cautioned that this influx places added strain on the island's infrastructure and limited parking in Charlestown, and he emphasised the importance of community cooperation to address the issue.

"Vehicles up on four stones, vehicles that we know will never drive again. Please cooperate. Allow us to take these things away and crush them and get them off the island," the premier urged.

The public will be informed ahead of the start of the initiative.

## St. Kitts And Nevis launches Civil Service Executive Leadership Training Programme



Participants of the Civil Service Executive Leadership Training Programme.

BASSETERRE-- The Government of St. Kitts and Nevis has officially launched the CFBC-Jenkins Ltd Executive Leadership in the Civil Service Course -- a landmark initiative designed to strengthen leadership capacity among permanent secretaries and directors across ministries and departments.

The 12-week course commenced yesterday, Thursday, September 11, with an opening ceremony at the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC) campus.

In her remarks, Head of the Civil Service, Thelma Richard, urged the participants to embrace the training as the beginning of a journey -- one that goes beyond professional development and enters the realm of transformative leadership.

"As permanent secretaries and directors, you are entrusted with defining and redefining the strategic directions of your min-

istries and departments. This requires more than operational excellence, it demands leadership that is strategic and agile," Ms. Richard said. "I foresee this programme equipping you with the knowledge, skills and ability to learn to lead more effectively within your various ministries, and to lead your projects and initiatives." Prime Minister, Dr. Terrence Drew, reinforced the importance of structured leadership training for the civil service. "It is a disservice to ask anyone to take up a task without providing the necessary tools, and that is why I asked that this course be put together," he said.

The prime minister further highlighted that early in his government's term, the entire Cabinet of Ministers -- including Dr. Denzil Douglas, with two decades of experience as prime minister -- undertook their own training in effective leadership.

"You are the ones who determine how government functions, and it was therefore essential that we provide this opportunity," Dr. Drew stated.

He further noted that participants will graduate with certification, ensuring their new skills can be applied throughout their professional careers. "This sets the tone for effectiveness, accountability, and innovation. In times of challenge, it is leadership that steadies the course. In moments of opportunity, it is leadership that ensures we seize the moment to benefit our people."

Dr. Drew commended CFBC for partnering with the government to design a course specifically tailored to the realities of the civil service. "By offering a programme that is tailored to the realities of our civil service, the college has become a true partner in national development," he said.

Both Prime Minister Drew and Ms. Richard expressed deep appreciation to Peter Jenkins, course facilitator and founder of the Jenkins Training Institute, for his expertise and partnership. They credited his growing reputation in the field and his passion for building others as driving forces behind the successful launch of the training course.

## Three near-drownings of kids in just a week

WILLEMSTAD--In the span of only one week, paediatricians at Curaçao Medical Center (CMC) have treated three separate cases of children who nearly drowned. The incidents occurred both at sea and in swimming pools.

Doctors are urging parents and guardians to ensure that any child younger than a swimming diploma always wears flotation devices such as arm-bands or a life vest, and that kids remain under constant supervision whenever they are in or near water. "Adults must keep their eyes on them at all times," hospital experts warned.

Medical specialists emphasized that near-drowning incidents can have serious and long-lasting consequences, even when youngsters survive. Among the risks are delayed symptoms, where a child may initially appear fine, but complications emerge hours or days later.

Other dangers include hypoxia, or lack of oxygen, which can damage the brain and affect movement and cognitive abilities; pneumonia caused by inhaled water; and long-term psychological impacts such as anxiety, fear of water, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Severe cases

may even result in permanent neurological damage affecting learning and behaviour.

These risks were explained in detail during CMC's podcast "Puntra un Eksperto" with Dr. Duque, streamed via the hospital's official Facebook page. The episode highlighted an urgent need for prevention and education, encouraging families to share the information widely.

With the recent rise in near-drowning incidents, CMC is calling on the community to remain vigilant and take simple, life-saving precautions whenever children are near water.

# AGENDA

## ST. EUSTATIUS

**Police Station** 182333  
**Emergency** 111  
**Hot Line** 108  
**Fire Department** 120  
**Hospital** 182211/182371  
**Landsradio** 182210  
**Post Office** 182207  
**St. Eustatius Historical Foundation Museum** 182288  
**Winair Office** 182362  
**Lions Club** meets every 1st and 3rd Wednesday at the "Den" next to the Airport  
**Drug Prevention Foundation** meets every Tuesday 5:30pm at the Golden Era Hotel.  
**Coastguard NA&A** 113  
**St. Eustatius National parks:** Gallows Bay: 318 2884

## SABA

**Police Station**  
**The Bottom**, tel. 4163237  
**Emergency** 111/112  
**Hospital**  
**The Bottom**, tel. 4163288/4163289  
**Fire Department Airport**  
**Flat Point**, tel. 4162210  
**SATEL**  
**The Bottom**, tel. 4163211  
**WINAIR, Airport**  
**Flat Point**, tel. 4162255/2713  
**Taxi Service Airport**  
**Flat Point**, tel. 160  
**Administration Building**  
**The Bottom**, tel. 4163311/4163312/4163313  
**Tourist Office**  
**Windwardside**, tel. 4162231  
**Harbour Office**  
**Fort Bay**, tel. 4163294  
**Saba Marine Park**  
**Fort Bay**, tel. 4163295  
**Nature & Hike Guide**  
**James Johnson**  
**The Bottom**, tel. 4163307  
**Service Club**  
**Saba Lions Club** general meeting every 1st and 3rd Tuesday 8:00 p.m. at Eugenius A. Johnson Center.  
**Coastguard NA&A** 113  
**Red Cross**  
**General meeting** every last Monday, 6 p.m., Eugenius A. Johnson Center.

## ANGUILLA

**EMERGENCY**  
**Police** 911  
**Fire** 911  
**Ambulance** 911  
**Police Station** 497 2333  
**Hospital** 497 2551  
**Disaster Department** 497 2926  
**Radio Anguilla** 497 2218  
**Tourism** 497 2759

**AIRLINES**  
**Anguilla Air Services** 498 5922  
**Trans Anguilla** 497 8690

**COURIER SERVICE**  
**DHL** 497 3400  
**Fedex** 497 2719  
**UPS** 497 2239

**SERVICE CLUBS**  
**Rotary**  
**Meets at Roy's Restaurant**  
**Every Thursday 6 pm**  
**Soroptimist International**  
**Meets at Day Care Centre**  
**2nd Tuesday in month 4.30 pm**  
**Lions Club**  
**1st and 3rd Tuesday**  
**Arts and Craft Centre 5.30 pm**  
**Toastmasters Club**  
**Every 2nd and 4th Saturday**  
**Anguilla Community College**  
**6.45pm**

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*l-r: President of the Golden Rock Cancer Awareness Foundation Geraldine Hodge, Millicent Romney-Lijfrock, Deacon Ricardo Fortin Sr., and Reina Lijfrock pause for a photo at the service.*

## The Golden Rock Cancer Awareness Foundation raising awareness about Prostate Cancer

ST. EUSTATIUS--The month of September is recognized as Prostate Awareness Month. Some members of The Golden Rock Cancer Awareness Foundation visited the Roman Catholic Church

on Sunday, September 7th, in honour of Prostate Awareness Month. During the service the Cancer Awareness Foundation was recognized. Deacon Ricardo Fortin Sr. said a few words and welcomed

the Foundation to the church.

The Cancer Awareness Foundation is hosting a presentation with herbalist Clifton James who will be providing information about healthy lifestyle habits on Thursday, September 18th, 2025. The event will be held at the Gertrude Judson Bicentennial Public Library, starting at 7:00pm. The public is invited to come out to the events. Please don't miss this very informative session.

On Thursday, September 25th, 2025, the foundation will also be hosting a Men's Night Out. The event will start at 7:30pm at the Gertrude Judson Bicentennial Public Library. Their guest speaker will be urologist Dr. Carlos Rojas from the Sint Maarten Medical Center and the topic the doctor will be speaking on will be prostate cancer. Men and women are invited to come and take part in the informative event.

## Dutch enjoy biggest rise in spending power in 20 years

AMSTERDAM--Last year the Dutch benefited from the biggest increase in spending power in over 20 years, with median household income up by 3.6%, according to figures from national statistics agency CBS.

The main drivers behind the rise were significantly higher wages, the CBS said. The median increase means that 50% of household incomes did not go up by as much while the rest were higher.

Workers were best off with an average rise in spending power of 5.3%. Inflation rose to 3.1% but was counterbalanced by an average wage rise of 6.8% – the highest increase in 40 years. People who changed to a better paid job also increased their spending power.

Households on benefits only increased their spending power by 0.2%, due to the abolition of the energy allowance.

The self-employed had 3.1% more to spend as measures such as a lower self-employed tax rebate depressed their spending power. Pensioners saw an increase of 1.8% following three consecutive years of spending power decline.

## Curaçao Parliament with awards, code of conduct

WILLEMSTAD--For the first time, the Parliament of Curaçao will present parliamentary awards to citizens and organisations that have made exceptional contributions to the community. According to President of Parliament Fergino Brownbill, the initiative is meant to highlight dedication and inspiration by recognising individuals and groups who help others move forward and strengthen society as a whole.

This announcement was made during Tuesday's

opening of the 2025–2026 legislative year, where Brownbill addressed both members and the people of Curaçao. He emphasised that Parliament is the heart of democracy, "a place where the voice of the people is heard and valued."

Alongside the new awards, Brownbill also announced the introduction of a Code of Conduct. A special oversight body will ensure integrity within the legislature. "Integrity is not a luxury, but a duty," the chairman

said, stressing that trust in politics depends on it.

Brownbill further called for greater unity and leadership at a time when Curaçao faces significant social, economic, and financial challenges. He noted that every challenge also presents an opportunity to emerge stronger.

With words of faith, gratitude and love for country, Brownbill formally declared the new parliamentary year open.

## National Service of Gratitude ahead of Independence Day

BASSETERRE, St. KITTS--The public is warmly invited to the National Service of Gratitude and Gospel Concert this Sunday, September 14, 2025, to thank God for His continued blessings upon St. Kitts and Nevis, as the twin-island federation proudly celebrates its 42nd anniversary of independence.

The special service is scheduled for 4 p.m. at the Zion Moravian Church on Victoria Road. Sub-committee member of the Independence 42 Planning Committee, Pastor Clive Saunders, said that the venue offers a more intimate setting, allowing persons to connect with the Spirit and each other.

"It's a time for us to reflect on the goodness of God," he stated. "God has been good to us as a nation, and so we are actually coming to give God thanks and praise for his goodness towards us. So we are coming to sing, clap, shout, dance and just be excited that God has brought us thus far as a nation."

Tents, chairs and big screen televisions will be mounted around the grounds to ensure persons outside of the sanctuary remain engaged during the service.

The concert is scheduled to begin 10 minutes after the service ends. Some of the best praise and worship teams from across St. Kitts and Nevis will be featured, along with special performances by Minister Blessed Ogbum and the Shekinah Dance Ministry.

"We want to encourage everyone to come on out and be a part of the service and concert. It is a time for us to worship God, and I would really like you to bring your family and be a part of it," said Pastor Saunders.

St. Kitts and Nevis celebrates its 42nd Anniversary of Independence on September 19, 2025, under the theme "Perpetual Progress – A Sustainable Future in View: Independence 42."

**DUTCH QUARTER PHARMACY**, +1 721-542-1980  
 Mon-Fri: 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Sat: Closed  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**FRONT STREET PHARMACY**, +1 721-543-8800  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

**PHILIPSBURG PHARMACY**, +1 721-542-3001  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

**CAY HILL PHARMACY**, +1 721-543-1119  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Sat: Closed  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**BUSH ROAD PHARMACY**, +1 721-542-4900  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**ST. PETERS PHARMACY**, +1 721-542-1087  
 Mon-Fri: 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. • Sat: 1:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**ORANGE GROVE PHARMACY**, +1 721-544-2013  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

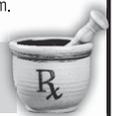
**FRIENDLY ISLAND PHARMACY**, +1 721-544-4290  
 Mon-Fri: 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.  
 1st and last Sat. of the month: 12:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**SIMPSON BAY PHARMACY**, +1 721-544-3653  
 Mon-Fri: 8:15 a.m. - 7:30 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**THE DRUGGIST PHARMACY**, +1 721-545-2777  
 Mon-Fri: 8:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. • Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: Closed

**MAHO PHARMACY**, +1 721-545-3200  
 Mon-Fri: 8:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
 Sat: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. / 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.  
 Sun & Holidays: 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. / 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

DUTCH SIDE PHARMACIES  
WEEK OPENING HOURS



Please scan the QR code for all dutchside pharmacies opening times or go to:

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In the event of a medical emergency (after closing of all pharmacies), contact the Emergency Room of the St. Maarten Medical Center (Hospital) at 543 1111.



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# Government Info Page

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120925



## HURRICANE SEASON 2025 "IT ONLY TAKES ONE! ARE YOU PREPARED?"

MINISTRY OF GENERAL AFFAIRS



### PUBLIC TENDER

The Minister of General Affairs, Dr. Luc F. E. Mercelina, hereby invites prospective bidders to the public tender bidding to:

**Upgrading the Marriage Hall for Sint Maarten** for the Government of Sint Maarten, this project includes the enhancement of interior furnishings, decorative elements, lighting, and audio systems for the Civil Registry Department.

#### Principal:

The Minister of General Affairs, Dr. Luc F.E. Mercelina, on behalf of the Government of Sint Maarten with coordination by the Civil Registry Department.

#### Financed by:

The Government of St. Maarten

#### Description of works:

Bidders must submit an offer in accordance with the Terms of Reference for the upgrading of the Marriage Hall for Sint Maarten, including the supply and installation of new elements, as well as the removal of the existing system. The project scope includes:

- Upgraded interior with contemporary decor elements.
- Elegant seating arrangements and improved guest accommodation.
- Installation of high-quality lighting to create a warm and inviting atmosphere.
- A well-designed stage for ceremonies with a luxurious backdrop.
- Sound and multimedia system enhancements.
- Improved entrance aesthetics, setting the tone for a grand celebration.

#### Terms of Reference Acquisition:

The Terms of Reference document will be available for collection at the Civil Registry Department (Front Office) in Philipsburg starting **Monday, August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025, from 11:00am-2:00pm until September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.**

#### An information meeting:

- **Venue:** Government Building Meeting Room (next to the St. Maarten Meeting Room)
- **Address:** Soualiga Road #1, Philipsburg, Sint Maarten
- **Date:** Wednesday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025
- **Time:** 1:00pm-3:00pm PM

#### Bid Submission Details

Bids must be submitted in duplicate, sealed in an envelope, and delivered to the Civil Registry Department no later than **12:00 PM, on Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025.**

The envelope must be clearly labeled: **'Upgrading of the Marriage Hall for Sint Maarten.'**

Bid envelopes will be opened in the presence of bidders by the Project Steering Committee at the St. Maarten Meeting Room in the Government Building on **Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025, at 2:00 PM.**

#### Eligibility and Submission Requirements:

To qualify, bidders must submit all required documentation as specified in the Terms of Reference.

#### Further information

Further information concerning the Tender procedure can be obtained from Ms. Rosemary Lejuez at [rosemary.lejuez@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:rosemary.lejuez@sintmaartengov.org) or Kathy Snijders at [kathy.snijders@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:kathy.snijders@sintmaartengov.org)


**DEPARTMENT OF  
ECONOMIC  
LICENSES**

The Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic, and Telecommunication received the following request from:

**Name:** WELL CHAT ENTERPRISES B.V.  
**dba:** A MINI MART

To operate a: Retail alcoholic beverages  
Location: Arch Road #93 B, Sucker Garden, Upper Princess Quarter

In accordance with article 21 of the National License Ordinance ("Vergunningslandsverordening"), requests for operating licenses, specifically the location of the establishment, are available for public viewing at the Department of Economic Licenses in the Government Administration Building, Soualiga Road #1, Great Bay, Sint Maarten, for a period of **14 days** after the date of this publication. During this time anyone has the right to object to the granting of the operating license(s) in writing. During **1 week** after expiration of the above-mentioned 14 days, both the applicant and those who have raised objections may review the objections submitted against the request.

Objections must be addressed to the Minister of Tourism, Economic Affairs, Traffic and Telecommunication and can be submitted in hard copy at the afore mentioned address or sent digitally to [DELObjections@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:DELObjections@sintmaartengov.org).

### Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure

#### The Department of Inspection

Are you seeking a challenge in making an active contribution to the development of the Inspection department team? Do you like sharing your talents and expertise with your colleagues? Are you a hands-on person interested in developing yourself? Then we are looking for you!

The Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure is seeking for the Department of Inspection an enthusiastic, dynamic, experienced, and qualified professional to fill the following function:

#### Technical Administrator

##### Tasks of the function include but are not limited to:

- The intake, assigning and monitoring of the progress of Complaints, Reports, Permits, and administrative orders of the department;
- Making monthly, quarterly and yearly financial overviews (including status reports, progress reports and statistical reports) and providing and requesting this information;
- Contributing to the preparation of the budget in consultation with the Department head;
- Acting as the first point of contact for internal employees and external bodies regarding administrative or technical matters of the department;
- Processing the flow of documents via the registration system and monitoring progress;
- Assessing incoming correspondence on importance and urgency;
- Drafting and advising on external letters such as requests for information, meetings and budget;
- Taking care of the administrative financial processing of electrical approvals;
- Administratively coordinating the daily activities of the staff within the department;
- Assisting in organizing maintaining and updating budget and financial records.

##### Requirements for our preferred candidate:

- Associate degree in Business Administration;
- A minimum of three (3) years experience in a related field;
- Knowledge of management support methods;
- Knowledge of archiving and documentation techniques;
- Knowledge of the organization's internal administrative procedures, regulations, tasks, structure and methods;
- Knowledge of relevant legal procedures;
- Skilled in creating and maintaining the archive, making progress reports, overviews, and taking notes;
- Skilled in organizing and coordinating tasks;
- Proper command of the English and Dutch language;
- Knowledge in budgeting.

##### Compensation

Salary range: minimum Cg 2,933.00 to maximum Cg 5,606.00.  
Salary based on experience and qualifications, within the established salary range, plus a benefits package that includes, pension and medical coverage.

For additional information, please contact the Head of Inspection via email address: [mario.jones@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:mario.jones@sintmaartengov.org)

##### Application period

If you are the right candidate for this position, please submit your application letter and resume no later than **September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025** to: [careers@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:careers@sintmaartengov.org) and [mario.jones@sintmaartengov.org](mailto:mario.jones@sintmaartengov.org). You can also submit your application at the Government Administration Building, Soualiga Road 1, Philipsburg, Sint Maarten.

GOVERNMENT OF SINT MAARTEN



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A drone view of Neve Daniel, a Jewish settlement in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, March 12, 2024. (REUTERS/Dedi Hayun/File Photo)

## Netherlands plans to ban imports from Israel's Jewish settlements

AMSTERDAM -- The Dutch government plans to ban imports of goods produced in Jewish settlements in Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories over Israel's plans for the West Bank and its military offensive in Gaza, the foreign minister told Parliament.

The Netherlands imposed travel bans on two far-right Israeli cabinet ministers in July, accusing them of inciting violence against Palestinians and calling for an "ethnic cleansing" of Gaza, but the government

had been reluctant to take further steps until now.

Last month, former Foreign Minister Casper Veldkamp resigned because he said he felt no support within the cabinet to take additional measures against Israel. But his successor, David van Weel, told Parliament late on Wednesday he had instructed his department to draft a government decree on the import ban, saying the measure would be implemented as soon as possible.

The Netherlands is a leading global buyer of Israeli goods, but Van Weel did not

say what volume of goods are currently imported from Jewish settlements.

Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal under international law. The Israeli government deems settlements legal under its own laws, while some so-called "outposts" are illegal but often tolerated and sometimes later legalised.

The Netherlands also supports the European Commission's plans to suspend trade-related measures in a European Union agreement with Israel, Van Weel said.

## Dutch strengthening infrastructure to make Netherlands "war proof"

THE HAGUE--The Dutch government is strengthening infrastructure across the country to prepare for potential military conflict, including reinforcing bridges, raising viaducts, and extending train platforms, officials said.

According to AD, Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management Robert Tieman and State Secretary Thierry Aartsen told reporters that these measures aim to make the country "war-ready," ensuring military equipment can be transported from ports like Vlissingen, Rotterdam, and Eemshaven to the east.

"You have long freight trains of 740 meters. If a platform ends before the train stops, it creates a problem for loading equipment," Aartsen said. "Not all bridges are strong enough for prolonged heavy transport."

Tieman highlighted risks posed by low viaducts and bridges needing reinforcement. He said authorities are identifying more than 65 critical infrastructure points in the Netherlands that must be addressed urgently. Security concerns prevent them from naming the locations.

The officials cited past disruptions, including copper theft at the Spijkenisserbrug and arson on railway lines near Schiphol during the NATO summit. "If you cut 28 cables in one location, you can paralyse half of northern Amsterdam," Aartsen told reporters.

Current infrastructure has been optimized for efficiency over resilience. "Maybe we need extra protective measures, like additional control houses, so half the country doesn't shut down if something happens," Tieman said.

Officials also noted constraints in rail operations.

"We have no extra rail capacity, so buffer zones are necessary," Tieman said. Currently, military transport reportedly lacks priority on the national rail network. Aartsen suggested a potential "military Schengen" to allow rapid troop and equipment movement.

"Every step we take contributes to deterrence," Aartsen said. "Resilience is not just what the Defence Minister does." Tieman added, "I sometimes say the Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management is the real war ministry. If we don't perform well, everything fails."

The government has also asked former Defence State Secretary Christophe van der Maat to lead a resilience task force, bringing together twelve critical sectors—including ProRail, NS, ports, water authorities, and Rijkswaterstaat.



# FOR SALE

This is an online sale by order of the bankruptcy trustee

**SINT MAARTEN** | Troostwijk Auctions is organizing four real estate auctions located in the Tower Building of the Rainbow Beach Club complex, on the ocean side of Cupecoy. The following properties will be sold:

- 3 One-bedroom apartments
- 3 parking studio apartments



**3 One-bedroom apartments**



**3 Parking studio apartments**

It is possible to view this object on appointment. More information about the possibilities can be found on the website. You can also send an email to [psoons@bzselaw.com](mailto:psoons@bzselaw.com) and/or [rzwanikken@bzselaw.com](mailto:rzwanikken@bzselaw.com) and you'll be contacted.

For more information and photo's, check our website:






Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid



## Out of the grip

**Your child could become a victim too!**

Criminals can use young people for odd jobs that are not innocent: delivering a package, hiding something, receiving money. In exchange for gifts, money or "friends".

This also happens on Bonaire, St. Eustatius and Saba. Often without parents noticing.

Pay attention to signals of criminal exploitation like secrecy, stress or sudden expensive items.

It can happen unnoticed. Also, at your home.

Go to [www.rijksdienstcn.com/outofthegrip](http://www.rijksdienstcn.com/outofthegrip) for more information

**Out of the grip – Stay alert together!**

# Barbados to host luxury travel summit

~Island Attracting More Large-Scale MICE Events~

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados—Future trends in the luxury incentive travel market will be decided in Barbados when the island hosts the prestigious Motivation Luxury Summit (MLS) for the first time from September 13 to 17.

This is the first time the event, supported by Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc. (BTMI), will be held outside of continental Latin America. It will bring together leading travel experts and meeting planners in the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions (MICE) industry for five days of intensive

business meetings, training, luxury experiences and networking opportunities. Activities are designed to foster impactful connections and develop strategic partnerships. Barbados' staging of the event is expected to further solidify the island's position as a premier luxury destination with enhanced capabilities to host high-level MICE events.

Chief Executive Officer of BTMI, Andrea Franklin, says the island's selection as the host for this year's event underscores the country's readiness to meet the growing needs of meeting planners

and luxury travel experts.

"The decision to host the conference here really re-affirms that Barbados has indeed captured the attention of key decision-makers in the meetings and incentive industry, and that they see the island as a dynamic destination capable of providing everything needed for high-calibre events – whether it's the professional services of our meeting planners and destination management companies; innovative media or logistical solutions; culturally authentic activities; our accommodation product or simply the luxury experi-

ences that all combine to create lasting impressions and memories," she said.

CEO of FIEXPO Exhibitions Group and the MLS, Vivian Nardone, says the island's consistent presence in the industry, and strategic approach to building its luxury brand, have cemented Barbados' position in the international incentive travel market space.

"Barbados has been a strategic ally of the MLS from inception, and hosting the summit here only adds to the appeal of the event. Our tourism partners here have been committed to meeting

the high standards and expectations of MLS delegates and I know attendees in turn are looking forward to experiencing the rich cultural heritage, gastronomy, immersive experiences, and eco-friendly accommodations that have helped to establish the island's enviable reputation in the international incentive travel market," she said.

Recent global events have shifted where international tourism leaders have traditionally looked when considering destinations for events and incentives. Local tourism officials believe this provides the perfect opportunity to further promote Barbados' capacity to deliver world-class conferences and incentive programmes.

The BTMI's Director, Latin America, Corey Garrett, said, "Hosting this event also aligns with Barbados' strategic eRorts to grow its presence in the Latin Ameri-

can luxury market. Latin American arrivals have already grown by nearly 33%, underscoring the success of our expanded connectivity and strategic partnerships. The successful staging of this event will be the island's calling card to leaders in Latin America's MICE industry, emphatically declaring that Barbados is open for future business. We already have a fantastic relationship with major players in the space, but hosting the MLS will further prove to key decision makers that we can host large-scale, multilingual business events alongside culturally rich, bespoke experiences."

Barbados-based operators are expected to leverage the island's extensive airlift, reliable digital connectivity, and modern infrastructure to attract event planners looking for new venues for their upcoming events.



**SXM** Princess Juliana International Airport

*We are hiring*  
Join our team!

**Air Traffic Services Director**

Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIAE), one of the Caribbean's busiest international gateways, is seeking a highly qualified and safety-driven professional to serve as **Director of Air Traffic Services (ATS)**. The Director will be responsible for the overall management and strategic leadership of the Air Traffic Services Division, ensuring the safe, efficient, and orderly handling of air traffic in accordance with ICAO standards, national regulations, and PJIAE policies.

**KEY RESPONSIBILITIES**

- Provide strategic oversight of Radar Control, Tower Control, and Aeronautical Information Services.
- Develop and implement ATS policies, procedures, and operational plans.
- Ensure safe and compliant air traffic operations in PJIAE's area of responsibility.
- Lead and develop ATS managers, supervisors, and operational staff.
- Liaise with civil aviation authorities, ICAO, airlines, and international stakeholders.
- Identify and implement advancements in ATS technology, training, and procedures.
- Contribute to short- and long-term strategic planning for ATS and airport operations.
- Liaise with local, regional, and international agencies to ensure consistency and quality in aeronautical information dissemination.
- Ensure fair and efficient scheduling, effective training programs, and high-performance standards.
- Promote a collaborative, safety-conscious, and service-oriented work culture.

**REQUIREMENTS**

- Bachelor's degree in Aviation Management, Business Administration, or a related field (Master's preferred).
- At least 7 years of senior management experience in aviation, transportation, or other safety-critical, regulated industries.
- Strong leadership and people management abilities, complemented by excellent decision making, interpersonal communication, consultations, conflict resolution, and stakeholder engagement skills.
- Knowledge of Air Traffic Control procedures is a strong advantage.

**WHY JOIN US?**

This is a unique opportunity to lead a critical division of PJIAE and make a direct contribution to the safety and efficiency of Caribbean aviation.

**TO APPLY**

Submit your CV and cover letter to: [career@sxmairport.com](mailto:career@sxmairport.com) with subject line: "Director ATS Application"  
**Application Deadline:** September 19, 2025

[www.SXMairport.com](http://www.SXMairport.com)



Former Opposition Leader Aubrey Norton

## APNU drops Aubrey Norton from parliamentary line-up

GEORGETOWN, Guyana--While he will retain his position as leader of the A Partnership for National Unity (APNU), Aubrey Norton will not be returning to Parliament to represent his party.

APNU executive Christopher Jones – who previously served as the opposition chief whip – confirmed this with INews Guyana. This publication understands that Norton will be replaced by businessman Terrence Campbell as the party's lead Member of Parliament (MP).

He said the party's full list of parliamentarians will be revealed today. The results of the September 1, 2025 polls show that APNU only secured 12 seats in the National Assembly – a significant decline, which has resulted in the party no longer holding the title as the main parliamentary opposition.

In the last parliament, the APNU and AFC had held 31 seats in the National Assembly, forming the main parliamentary opposition. Of these, the AFC itself occupied 9 of those seats, while the remaining 22 were held by APNU politicians.

The main parliamentary opposition will now be the We Invest in Nationhood (WIN) party which picked up 16 seats. WIN's founder and leader, US-sanctioned businessman Azruddin Mohamed, has indicated that he will take up the constitutional position of Opposition Leader.

Meanwhile, former APNU parliamentarian Amanza Walton-Desir's breakaway party called Forward Guyana Movement (FGM) won one seat and she will be occupying that bench in the National Assembly.

The remaining 36 seats will be occupied by the Peoples Progressive Party Civic (PPP/C) which won the 2025 elections by a landslide; the party secured 242,498 votes.



# Pres. Ali advances data centre, AI vision in meetings with ExxonMobil, Cerebras

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—In his first week since being re-elected as President of Guyana, Dr Irfaan Ali has been meeting with a number of officials from different sectors to discuss new projects and areas of collaboration.

Recently, the Head of State met with Alistair Routledge, the President of ExxonMobil Guyana, and Andrew Feldman, the CEO and Co-Founder of Cerebras, a technology company specialising in Artificial Intelligence (AI) development and training.

Discussions focused on advancing Guyana's data centre agenda and its vision for data sovereignty, the President's official Facebook Page noted.

President Ali also met with a team from Northwell Health led by Vice President and Founding Direc-

tor of Northwell Health's Centre for Global Health, Dr Eric Cioè-Peña.

This meeting focused on the implementation of the National Emergency Medicine Authority and on working in collaboration with ExxonMobil to establish a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Centre in Guyana.

Last month, President Ali announced that a proposal was made for Guyana's first data centre to be developed at Wales, West Bank of Demerara.

The Head of State did not provide further details on the data centre but noted that the facility will position Guyana as a hub for healthcare provision, training, and pharmaceutical manufacturing.

The data centre is also intended to be a research

institution on data analytics, artificial intelligence development and translational science. The development comes as the country's significant offshore gas reserves open doors to multiple industrial ventures. At the 2025 Guyana Energy Conference and Supply Chain Expo, President of ExxonMobil Guyana, Alistair Routledge, highlighted opportunities to use the resources for refining bauxite into alumina, powering data centres, and supplying energy to fertiliser plants.

Already, about 50 million cubic feet per day (mcf/d) of gas will be supplied to the mega energy project at Wales, West Bank Demerara. The gas will be transported via a pipeline from the Liza project in the Stabroek Block.

A 300-megawatt (MW)



President of Guyana, Dr Irfaan Ali met with Alistair Routledge, the President of ExxonMobil Guyana.

power plant is being constructed in Wales; it will use natural gas from the Stabroek Block to generate cleaner, cheaper electricity. Additionally, a Natural Gas Liquids (NGL) processing plant will treat the

gas, removing liquids such as propane and butane for commercialisation.

At what ExxonMobil believes will be its eighth development, Longtail in the southeast portion of the Stabroek Block, about 1

to 1.2 billion cubic feet per day can be produced. And with that, Routledge said,

comes the opportunity to pursue several ventures, be it alumina production or powering the data centres.

~News Room~



## On behalf of SZV, BDO is looking for Supervisory Council Member with Accounting Background

The Supervisory Council (Raad van Toezicht) of the Uitvoeringsorgaan Sociale en Ziektekosten Verzekeringen (SZV) is entrusted with overseeing the strategic and operational integrity of the organization. SZV is the key institution responsible for implementing and managing Sint Maarten's national social and health insurance schemes. It operates as an autonomous public entity under the responsibility of the Minister of Public Health, Social Development, and Labor (VSA).

The Council ensures that SZV operates transparently, efficiently, and in compliance with laws and regulations, while safeguarding the interests of all stakeholders.

### COMPOSITION

The Supervisory Council consists of seven members, each bringing a mix of professional expertise relevant to SZV's mission. Members are nominated based on integrity, experience, and the ability to provide independent and strategic oversight.

For this vacancy, SZV is specifically seeking a Council Member with proven expertise in Accountancy who will contribute to strengthening financial oversight, internal control, and risk management.

### ROLE

The Supervisory Council's primary role is to guide and supervise the management of SZV in the broadest sense. Members regularly review operational performance, the organization's financial position, investment strategy, and risk profile.

The Council member with Accountancy expertise will contribute to the collective responsibilities of the Council, with particular focus on providing expert guidance on the following matters:

**ABOUT SZV** | SZV is responsible for the administrative and financial management of the social and health insurances of Sint Maarten. Providing access to medical insurance benefits to employees and their families, pension allowances, loss of wages for employers, and ensuring compliance with premium collection. Partnering with government officials, healthcare professionals, and community stakeholders, SZV contributes to the sustainable development of Sint Maarten.

- Review and evaluate financial reports, budgets, forecasts, and annual accounts;
  - Overseeing compliance with accounting standards, financial risk management principles, and corporate governance requirements;
  - Evaluating the adequacy of internal controls, audit mechanisms, and the administrative organization;
  - Monitoring investment strategies, cost-effectiveness, and fiscal sustainability of the insurance funds;
  - Contribute to strategic discussions on tariffs, premiums, and long-term fiscal planning;
  - Translating complex financial and risk information into clear, actionable advice for Council decision-making.
  - Other matters related to this field of expertise.
- This role requires a high level of professional skepticism, analytical ability, and the capacity to bridge technical accounting matters with strategic governance.

### REQUIREMENTS

In addition to meeting the general requirements for Council members, candidates for this position must have

- **Education & Experience**
  - A bachelor's or master's degree in Economics, Accountancy, Finance, or a closely related discipline;
  - A minimum of 7 years of relevant professional experience, of which 5 years in a senior financial, accounting, or financial auditor role;
  - Proven expertise in accountancy, audit, or risk management, preferably within public sector finance or social insurance systems;
  - Knowledge of risk management principles, corporate governance, and financial compliance frameworks;
  - Experience in assessing and interpreting complex financial statements, budgets, and performance indicators.

- **Skills & Competencies**
  - Strong analytical ability with attention to both strategic and operational implications;
  - Expertise in assessing risk management systems, internal controls, and audit findings;
  - Familiarity with economic and market factors affecting social and health insurance schemes;
  - Political and environmental awareness, with the ability to operate impartially and independently;
  - Excellent communication skills and the ability to present financial and auditing insights clearly to non-financial stakeholders;
  - Commitment to ongoing professional development in the field of economics, financial reporting, and governance.
- **General Requirements for All Council Members**
  - Resident of Sint Maarten and of impeccable character;
  - Able to pass integrity screening and submit a Certificate of Good Conduct;
  - Willing to dedicate sufficient time to prepare for and attend quarterly and ad-hoc meetings;
  - No conflicting positions or functions as defined by the National Ordinance.

### APPLICATION PROCESS

Candidates interested in joining the Supervisory Council should submit their resume and cover letter by **September 30th, 2025**, to [applications@bdo.cw](mailto:applications@bdo.cw) Please reference your application as **Application - SZV Supervisory Council Member with Accounting Background**



# Education Minister supports schools on discipline, says parents' failings cause schools to take over

KINGSTON, JAMAICA—Amid heated debate over the enforcement of grooming rules at the start of the new school year on Monday, Education Minister Dr Dana Morris Dixon has pledged the support of her ministry to administrators of schools as they enforce discipline.

Addressing the launch of Shortwood Teachers' College's 140th anniversary celebration on Wednesday, Morris Dixon argued that due to a great lack of regulation in many Jamaican homes, discipline must be maintained as an irreplaceable pillar in schools.

"School is not like when I went to school or when you went to school, it is very different. We have our children coming to school from homes where nobody cares to teach them how to be a good citizen. Nobody cares to instil discipline in them.

They're not getting it in the home. They're not getting it in the community," said Morris Dixon.

"On the matter of discipline, we are talking about it a lot in Jamaica, we have to stand with our schools and our principals on this matter of discipline," added Morris Dixon.

The education minister told the audience that schools have been tasked to greatly emphasise their duty as a societal institution, taking on both primary – a role that is vested in families and secondary socialisation.

She declared that an educator's impact on the socialisation of students must not be understated.

"Our schools have become something different. Our teachers are becoming the parents. Our teachers are often the [ones] – not just the guidance counsellor –

taking on the role that the family should have taken," said Dixon Morris.

"It is not easy being in our schools or in our classrooms. It's very difficult. Our classrooms have to be seen as places of re-socialisation because our children are not learning it at home and so we have to be strong," added the education minister who has faced some criticisms over the ministry's stance to just oppose schools locking out students who breach their dress codes.

Since Monday there have been reports of students across the island being locked out for breaches of rules governing hairstyles and dress codes.

In response, Morris Dixon reiterated the ministry's stance that no student should be locked out of the school compound, and should instead be permit-

ted entry, and where there are matters related to possible grooming infractions, these should be discussed and addressed in collaboration with the parents to ensure compliance.

But in a clear signal that this did not mean the ministry would allow students to breach school rules, Morris Dixon told those at the teachers' college on Wednesday that she is dedicated to ensuring that schools are seen as places of learning and instilling the necessary principles that will allow students to grow into valuable mem-

bers of society.

"The vision we have for Jamaica – and a vision that I know can be a reality – will not happen if we do not instil discipline in our children. And so as we talk about rules, we have to understand that the Jamaica that's going to be a beacon in this world is going to have to be one that is disciplined," declared Morris Dixon.

She added that though the need for order in schools was paramount, students' safety must also be ensured at all times.

"Of course, that does not

mean that there are not rules around the way in which we administer discipline; that's very important. Our children also need to be valued and our children need to be kept safe.

"But at the heart of it, and as minister of education today, I am telling you that my focus is on having disciplined school environments," said Morris Dixon, who is expected to retain the education portfolio when Prime Minister Dr Andrew Holness names his new Cabinet next week.

~Jamaica Observer~

## St. Lucian climate advocate joins regional leaders at youth conference

CASTRIES, St Lucia—Genesis Alfred, a young Saint Lucian climate advocate, has taken the stage at the first-ever Caribbean Youth Environment and Climate Change Conference (CYECC 2025) in Kingston, Jamaica. The four-day conference will end on Friday.

Alfred, who serves as a regional delegate for the Caribbean Biodiversity Fund (CBF) and programme manager for both the Caribbean Climate Justice Project (CCJP) and Youth IRIE, joined regional leaders and fellow changemakers in shaping conversations on biodiversity, climate action and sustainable futures

for the Caribbean.

She was pictured on day one alongside Karen McDonald Gayle, CEO of the CBF, who also addressed delegates at the event.

For Alfred, the conference comes at a pivotal moment. Through CCJP and Youth IRIE, she is spearheading initiatives that place justice at the heart of climate action. Among them is the region's first Climate and Technology Hackathon, which was recently launched with applications now open to youth across the Caribbean.

"The hackathon focuses on youth and ensuring they meet technology where it meets climate change,

while keeping justice and fairness at the centre," Alfred explained in a statement.

Participants are expected to develop prototypes ranging from smart farming tools and water monitoring systems to early warning devices and climate data dashboards.

Promising ideas, said Leandra Pinel, programme officer for CCJP and Youth IRIE, will not remain confined to prototypes. "They'll be further developed and shared at international platforms, potentially influencing policy reform, education, and grassroots action across the region."



The Guyana Fire Service battling a massive fire on James Street, Albouystown, Georgetown, that has already destroyed several buildings

## Massive fire destroys several buildings in Albouystown

GEORGETOWN, Guyana—The Guyana Fire Service battled a massive fire on James Street, Albouystown, Georgetown, yesterday that has destroyed several buildings.

The News Room understands that an apartment building was destroyed. The chaotic scene on Thursday afternoon saw many residents in tears and inconsolable as their homes and possessions were reduced to ashes.

One resident described the terrifying moment when the fire broke out. The man said he lived in the apartment

building and was asleep when the fire started. He was awakened by neighbours banging on his door, alerting him to the fire.

"I move my bus and when I come around back and decide to see what I can retrieve from my apartment, the only thing I could retrieve is my documents and my TV," the man said.

"All my lil money, my savings I was saving to buy a car, all of that burn up in there. I does work hard pon the wharf, and now everything gone up in flames," the man said while holding back tears.

Divisional Officer Otis Charles, in an update, said the Guyana Fire Service received a call about the blaze and responded with six fire tenders.

"When we arrived, one building was already fully engulfed in flames, and another was starting to catch, so we immediately got into firefighting mode," Charles explained.

Firefighters continue to work tirelessly to ensure the blaze is fully extinguished and to prevent further damage to surrounding properties.

## PM touts VAT rate reduction

NASSAU, The Bahamas—Prime Minister (PM) Phillip Brave Davis said on Sunday that the reduction of the value-added tax (VAT) rate on a range of essential items will bring relief to residents who are struggling.

The reduction in the VAT rate by 50% on items including baby and adult diapers, feminine hygiene products, medication, as well as medical and dental supplies took effect September 1. The reduction was announced by PM Davis during his budget communication in May.

"This relief is possible because the economy is stronger and government finances are on a sounder footing," PM Davis said in a statement.

"As revenues grow and debt comes down, we are



Phillip Davis

making life more affordable for Bahamian families. This progress is the result of choices we made to rescue the country from crisis and to drive a strong recovery. But our goal has never been recovery alone. Our mission is to build a bigger, more inclusive economy where economic gains are broadly shared. That is why

we are expanding opportunities island by island, creating more jobs, supporting entrepreneurs, investing in roads, docks, and airports, modernising our electricity grid, and preparing Bahamians with education, training, and upskilling so they can succeed in today's economy.

"Our continued efforts and focus are to build on this progress, widening the circle of opportunity, lowering costs for families, and ensuring growth reaches every island and every community."

In April, government also reduced the VAT rate from 10% to 5% on food items, including fresh fruits and vegetables, baby food, lunch snacks and frozen food. ~The Nassau Guardian~

# Investigators in Charlie Kirk killing find weapon, release images of person of interest

OREM, Utah--U.S. investigators on Thursday released photos and a video of a person of interest in the fatal shooting of influential conservative activist Charlie Kirk and said they had found the rifle believed to have been used in the politically charged killing.

Kirk, a 31-year-old author, podcast host and close ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, helped build the Republican Party's support among younger voters. He was killed on Wednesday by a single gunshot as he gave a talk at a university in Utah in what Trump called a "heinous assassination."

Investigators have yet to publicly discuss any motive, but Trump told reporters that he had an indication of the killer's motivation. "We'll let you know about that later," he said, adding that law enforcement was making "big progress" in the investigation.

FBI and state officials said



A combination photo shows a person of interest in the fatal shooting of U.S. right-wing activist and commentator Charlie Kirk during an event at Utah Valley University, in Orem, Utah, U.S., in security footage released by the Utah Department of Public Safety on Thursday. (Utah Department of Public Safety/Handout via Reuters)

The FBI offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to the killer's arrest and circulated grainy images taken from security cameras showing a "person of interest" wearing a black top, black sun-

glasses and a dark baseball cap.

The video also showed the man crossing a street and moving into a wooded area near campus, which is where authorities said they found a "high-powered, bolt-action" rifle.

The shooter has not been publicly identified, though lawmakers, commentators and online sleuths have already filled social media and message boards with speculation and blame-casting about the killer's ideology. Utah Governor Spencer Cox appealed to the public for help. "We cannot do our job without the public's help right now," he told reporters.

He said investigators had received over 7,000 tips from the public and investigators had conducted over 200 interviews.

FBI Director Kash Patel traveled to Utah and appeared at a press briefing with state and federal officials, but did not speak.

### Trump To Award Kirk Top Honour

Kirk - co-founder and president of the conservative student group Turning Point USA - was appearing at the Utah university on Wednesday as part of a planned 15-event "American Comeback Tour" of U.S. college campuses. His killing stirred outrage and denunciations of political violence from Republicans, Democrats and foreign governments.

Trump said he would

award Kirk the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honour. Vice President JD Vance cancelled his trip to New York to commemorate the attacks by al Qaeda on September 11, 2001, and instead travelled

to Utah to see Kirk's family and to fly them and Kirk's casket home to Arizona aboard Air Force Two. Kirk began in conservative and right-wing politics as a teenager, a career he has described as shaped by his Christian faith. A little more than a decade he made along the way are now at the highest levels of U.S. government and media, with Vance recalling that he was in multiple group chats with Kirk.

"So much of the success we've had in this administration traces directly to Charlie's ability to organize and convene," Vance wrote in a tribute posted on social media. "He didn't just help us win in 2024, he helped us staff the entire government."

### Era Of Violence

The shooting punctuated the most sustained period of U.S. political violence since the 1970s. Reuters

has documented more than 300 cases of politically motivated violent acts across the ideological spectrum since supporters of Trump attacked the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

Trump himself has survived two attempts on his life last year, one that left him with a grazed ear during a campaign event and another two months later foiled by federal agents. Kirk, who was married and the father of two young children, was celebrated by Republicans as a charismatic advocate for right-wing policies on race, gender, immigration, religion and gun regulation. He frequently engaged with his critics from the far left to the far right, often inviting members of his audiences to debate him live.

Trump told reporters that he had spoken with Kirk's wife, Erika Frantzve, "And she's devastated, she's absolutely devastated, as you can imagine."



People hold placards with images of conservative commentator Charlie Kirk as they gather to mourn U.S. right-wing activist, an ally of U.S. President Donald Trump, who was fatally shot during an event at Utah Valley University, outside the U.S. embassy in Madrid, Spain, on Thursday.

the killer arrived on the campus a few minutes before the start of the event, a debate led by Kirk titled "Prove Me Wrong" outdoors in front of 3,000 people at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, about 40 miles (65 km) south of Salt Lake City.

Security-camera videos show a person going up stairwells to get onto a roof before firing at Kirk, the officials told a press conference. Kirk, a staunch defender of gun rights, was answering an audience question about mass shootings when the bullet struck his neck. Audience members fled in panic.

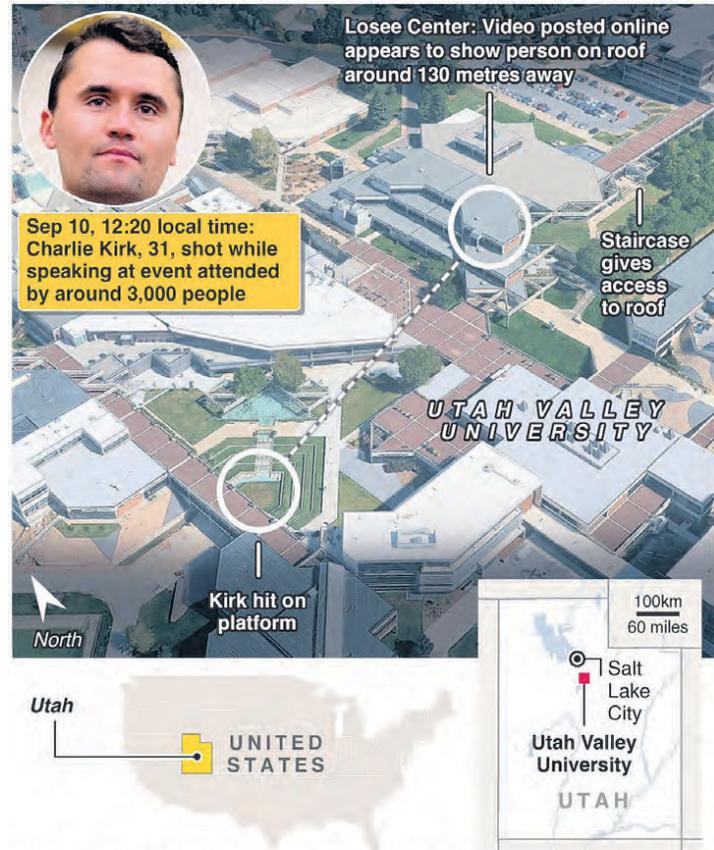
glasses and a dark baseball cap. The long-sleeved top was emblazoned with an image of a bald eagle flying across a U.S. flag.

A second batch of photos released by Utah state officials showed slightly clearer images of the slender young man, revealing greater details of his backpack and Converse shoes.

Officials also released video of a man climbing down off the roof from where the sniper fired the fatal round. That person left a palm imprint and other DNA materials on the building as he dropped down to the ground, Utah Department of Public Safety Commis-

## Trump ally Charlie Kirk assassinated

U.S. conservative activist Charlie Kirk, an influential ally of President Donald Trump, was shot dead while speaking at a Utah university



# Inside the CIA's secret fight against Mexico's narcos

MEXICO CITY--In January 2023, the Mexican government deployed helicopter gunships and hundreds of soldiers into rural Sinaloa to capture Ovidio Guzmán López, the son of the imprisoned cartel kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán. In the hunt for the young capo, the mission's architects worked hand-in-glove with a powerful American backer: the Central Intelligence Agency.

Ahead of the raid, America's premier spy agency leveraged its vast eavesdropping apparatus to surveil the communications of Guzmán's associates to locate him in his mother's hometown in the western Sierra Madre mountains, according to four former U.S. intelligence and law enforcement sources. CIA analysts assembled a detailed dossier, known as a "targeting package," on El Chapo's flashy son. The CIA was helped by intel from a member of Ovidio's circle who had secretly flipped, three of the sources added.

Finally, to carry out the arrest itself, the Mexican Army deployed an elite unit that was trained, equipped and vetted by the CIA, a dozen current and former U.S. and Mexican officials said.

A Reuters investigation has found that the CIA has been running covert operations in Mexico for years to track down the country's most-wanted drug traffickers. The secret: The U.S. spy agency works closely with special narco-hunting units inside the Mexican military.

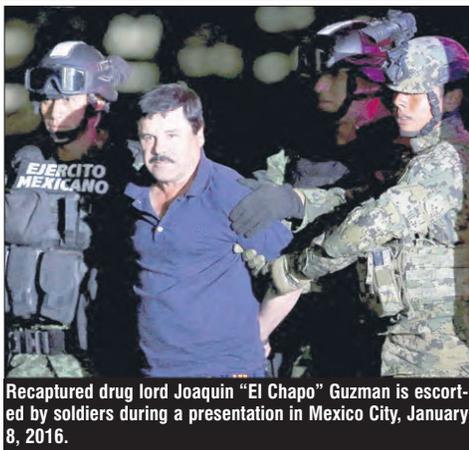
With the permission of the Mexican government, the CIA gives training and equipment to these outfits, as well as financial backing for activities like travel. The U.S. spy agency also screens their members with U.S.-administered polygraph tests, which is why the groups are often called "CIA vetted units."

Today, there are at least two such CIA vetted military units operating in Mexico. In addition to the Mexican Army group that nabbed Ovidio, there's a special Mexican Navy intelligence outfit, according to eight current and former Mexican and U.S. officials.

In the past, the CIA also had vetted units within



The seal of the Central Intelligence Agency is shown at the entrance of the CIA headquarters in McLean, Virginia, U.S.



Recaptured drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán is escorted by soldiers during a presentation in Mexico City, January 8, 2016.



Ovidio Guzman, son of kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, is briefly captured by Mexican military police in a residential compound near the centre of Culiacán in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico October 17, 2019 in this still image taken from a helmet camera footage obtained October 30, 2019.

Mexico's now-defunct federal police, a state-level police force, and the federal attorney general's office, according to two former senior U.S. and Mexican officials. These CIA vetted units, the details of which Reuters is reporting for the first time, fall under the agency's covert operations. Such activities are generally classified, and their budgets and staffing are kept secret.

To detail the CIA's activities in Mexico, Reuters spoke to more than 60 current and former U.S. and Mexican security sources, including former CIA officers, diplomats from both countries, U.S. anti-narcotics agents, and Mexican military leaders who worked closely with the U.S. spy agency. The majority spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss

the intelligence agency's activities.

## Long History

The CIA has a long history of operations in Latin America, particularly during the Cold War, when the agency worked with military juntas and dictators to counter leftist governments and guerrillas. The agency also helped topple South America's cocaine trafficking empires at the end of the 20th century.

But the U.S. spy agency's secret fight against Mexico's cartel leaders has gone largely unreported. The CIA vetted Mexican army and navy units have played key roles in planning or executing the majority of captures of high-profile narcos in recent years. The army outfit is comprised of hundreds of CIA-trained

special forces and is seen as the military force in Mexico most capable of nabbing heavily armed drug lords holed up in fortified mountain hideouts, security sources say.

That has turned the CIA into the gatekeeper of American anti-narcotics operations in Mexico, according to current and former U.S. security sources. "The CIA is the facilitator and the coordinator on some of the most important anti-narcotics issues in Mexico," said a recently departed senior official in the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City. "Those units are extremely important."

For decades the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration has been the face of U.S. anti-narcotics efforts in Mexico. The DEA and other U.S. law enforcement

agencies, such as Homeland Security Investigations (HSI), lead the U.S. effort to investigate suspected drug traffickers and gather evidence that is admissible in U.S. courtrooms. These agencies also work with Mexican counterparts to execute complex capture operations.

But inside the U.S. embassy, the CIA spearheads the high-level coordination between the myriad U.S. agencies working on anti-narcotics, the American security sources said. To some, the embassy's seating arrangement symbolizes the power dynamic: CIA analysts – and those of other U.S. intel agencies – sit on the same floor as the ambassador. DEA, HSI and other law enforcement agents have their desks on the floor below.

In response to detailed questions from Reuters, the White House said in a statement: "The United States and Mexico are working as sovereign partners to successfully stop the illegal flow of deadly narcotics across the border and eliminate the cartel networks responsible."

"Thanks to the leadership and partnership" of U.S. President Donald Trump and Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum, "the threat posed by transnational terrorist organizations armed with illicit narcotics diminishes by the day and efforts will not cease until American communities are safe from the scourge of drugs and cartels," the statement said.

CIA spokesperson Liz Lyons said in a statement that Mexico's cartels have become a significant focus for the agency. "From day one, Director (John) Ratcliffe made securing our southern border and countering drug cartels in Mexico and regionally a top Agency priority to support President Trump's directive to end narco-trafficking," she said.

The Mexican government did not respond to detailed questions for this report.

## Find, Fix, Finish

The new insights into the CIA vetted units and the U.S. spy agency's extensive anti-narcotics activities come as the Trump administration is weighing a dramatic escalation of the U.S. drug war in Mexico, one that could strain the bilateral relationship.

The CIA and U.S. law enforcement have long operated south of the border solely at the discretion of Mexico's government, which greenlights all capture operations and uses Mexican forces to execute them. But Trump has said publicly that Washington may take unilateral military action in Mexico if the Mexican government failed to dismantle drug cartels. His administration has designated several Mexican cartels as foreign terrorist organizations, which former national security officials say lays the groundwork for military action inside the country.

Case in point: Last week, the U.S. military killed 11 people in a strike on a vessel in the southern Caribbean.

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# CIA'S SECRET FIGHT

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an that allegedly departed Venezuela carrying illegal narcotics. Without publicly offering evidence, U.S. officials said that those killed were members of a Venezuelan cartel that the Trump administration has also designated as a foreign terrorist group.

As for Mexico, U.S. military and intelligence officials have in recent months discussed options for carrying out deadly strikes against drug cartels inside the country, according to two U.S. officials involved in the talks. What role the CIA could play in such a campaign is unclear. The CIA and U.S. special operations forces often work side-by-side on complex operations, particularly since the U.S. war on terror began a generation ago, former CIA and elite military officers said.

Inside its headquarters in Langley, Virginia, the CIA is moving resources and personnel to amp up counter-cartel efforts, including through the creation of a new Americas and Counter-narcotics Mission Center, its leadership has said. Top counterterrorism officials have been reassigned to work on Mexican cartels, according to three intelligence sources. The agency has increased its drone surveillance flights south of the border, other former intelligence officials say.

CIA Deputy Director Michael Ellis has said the agency is applying lessons learned from the global war on terror to the Mexican cartels. "We have built a finely tuned machine at the CIA over the past 20 years since 9/11 to find, fix, and finish terrorist targets, and now we are going to be taking that machine and turning to the cartels," he said in a May episode of the podcast of Tudor Dixon, a U.S. conservative commentator.

The phrase "find, fix, finish" is used in national security circles to refer to the process of locating a target and then capturing or killing that person. The CIA declined to elaborate on Ellis' comments.

### Dubious Track Record

The Trump administration's increasingly aggressive approach to fighting the region's drug traffickers has created a high-stakes balancing act for President Sheinbaum of Mexico's ruling leftist Morena party.

With Mexico facing economic pressure from Washington over tariffs and the prospect of U.S. military intervention, Sheinbaum has increased her government's efforts to combat organized crime. She has presided over a nearly year-long offensive against the Sinaloa Cartel. And she has approved two, unprecedented mass expulsions of more than 50 suspected drug traffickers to the U.S.

These measures have won her praise from top U.S. officials. But Sheinbaum has stated repeatedly that unilateral U.S. action in Mexico is a red line.

"We will not accept any violation of our territory," she said in a news conference last week. "We do not accept subordination, but simply collaboration between nations on equal terms."

Some CIA veterans of the U.S. war on terror are likewise wary of the prospect of Washington taking a more militaristic approach to fighting drug trafficking in Mexico, a U.S. ally, neighbour and top trading partner. Ralph Goff, a former CIA operations officer with extensive experience in covert and paramilitary operations, cited the potential of civilian casualties, cartel retaliation and diplomatic fallout.

"Sicario is a good movie, but bad U.S. policy," he said, referring to a 2015 thriller about a CIA-led paramilitary operation inside Mexico. "Drugs are a consumption problem, not a production problem. We can't just kill our way out of this."

The U.S. track record in Mexico thus far has cast doubt on whether a more muscular role will yield the



Mexico's Secretary of Defence Luis Sandoval and Mexico's President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador show video footage when Mexican military forces briefly captured Ovidio Guzman, son of kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, during a news conference at National palace in Mexico City, Mexico October 30, 2019.

desired results. The CIA's vetted military units have become Mexico's most successful forces for hunting down suspected traffickers. But the capture of drug kingpins has fractured cartels and sparked bloody power struggles. Some 30,000 Mexicans are murdered each year, according to Mexico's national statistics agency. Many of those killings stem from cartel-related violence.

Meanwhile, narco-hunting did little to stop the flood of fentanyl on American streets and Mexico's ascension as the world's top producer of the synthetic opioid. Over the last five years, some 50,000 to 75,000 Americans have died annually from synthetic opioid overdoses, almost exclusively from Mexican-made illicit fentanyl.

To be sure, the CIA is just one of several anti-narcotics actors. The Mexican

government sets its own national security strategy, decides on the top targets, and approves capture operations. U.S. law enforcement – including the DEA – has for decades followed the so-called kingpin strategy of tracking and taking down cartel leaders. But by acting in secret, the CIA has largely escaped scrutiny for its role in the troubled drug war.

### On The CIA'S Dime

In the mid-1990s, Roberto Aguilera Olivera was the leader of a virtually unknown Mexican Army unit called "Special Intelligence Issues". Its main adversary was the Zapatistas, a leftist indigenous group that staged an uprising in 1994. Then the CIA arrived, looking for a local partner to help it hunt down drug traffickers.

The Mexican Army repurposed the group as the

Anti-Narcotics Intelligence Center in 1995. The CIA gave the team hack-proof computers and a portable eavesdropping machine, said Aguilera, who helped set up the unit before being posted to London as Mexico's military attaché. The CIA flew the unit's officers to the U.S. for training in espionage and surveillance. CIA specialists designed prosthetic mustaches, wigs and fake scars for the Mexican soldiers to use as undercover disguises.

Jack Devine headed the CIA's then-recently created counter-narcotics center in Langley in the early 1990s. He helped build out the CIA's network of vetted anti-narcotics units in key Latin American countries.

"The decision was made to create units where we're really going to give them state-of-the-art technical equipment and we're going to give them state-of-the-art intelligence collection capabilities," Devine said.

In Mexico, the Anti-Narcotics Intelligence Center quickly emerged as Mexico's premier narco-hunting outfit. Aguilera returned to Mexico and led the unit from 2000 to 2006. Now retired, he recounted how its soldiers, traveling in disguise on the CIA's dime, fanned out across Mexico to surveil, film and wiretap drug lords and their confidants. In 2000, the outfit was renamed the Drug Trafficking Information Analysis Group (or GAIN, for its acronym in Spanish).

"The CIA helped massively," Aguilera said. Mexico's Army did not respond to

a list of detailed questions about the history of GAIN and its relationship with the CIA.

Still, Aguilera said that he and his men – not the U.S. spy agency – were in charge of the unit and its operations, and that they were responsible for the intel it collected. While the CIA provided support, the unit was Mexican-led, and Aguilera reported to his Army superiors. Other CIA vetted units that emerged in the coming years followed the same playbook.

"I'm very proud that all the success that I had in my era was intelligence which we produced," said Aguilera, who retired at the rank of brigadier general.

In 2001, GAIN's soldiers got their first view of a young Ovidio Guzmán, as they were hunting for his notorious father, El Chapo. By that point, the CIA had already had El Chapo on its radar for about a decade. In 1993, a CIA vetted Guatemalan military unit arrested El Chapo near the Mexican border, according to a former longtime CIA officer in Latin America. El Chapo was then imprisoned in Mexico, and the CIA set up a mobile listening platform outside the facility, hoping to ward off a possible escape, the officer said. But El Chapo was transferred to a different jail and broke out in 2001.

That's when Aguilera's men discovered that El Chapo's second wife, Griselda, was living in an upscale Mexico City neighbourhood. Aguilera's

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Mexico's President Claudia Sheinbaum listens to a question during her daily news conference at National Palace, in Mexico City, Mexico, June 25, 2025.

## CIA'S SECRET FIGHT

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agents rented a house nearby to set up an eavesdropping station. The soldiers trailed Ovidio, who was then about 10 years old, to the prestigious private school where he and his siblings were enrolled. In mid-2001, Griselda and Ovidio unwittingly led Aguilera's agents to El Chapo's hideout in the western state of Nayarit, but the soldiers missed the cartel chief after someone tipped him off, Aguilera said.

A few months later, Al Qaeda hijackers flew planes into the Twin Towers in New York and the Pentagon in Washington. The CIA's mission pivoted sharply to terrorism. The U.S. spy agency diverted resources from Latin America to America's wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The CIA took top analysts from the CIA's counternarcotics center and tasked them with fighting terrorism, according to former agency officials.

Nearly a quarter of a century later, the opposite is occurring, as top-tier counterterrorism analysts are being reassigned to Mexico, former U.S. intelligence sources say.

### 'They're Invisible'

But even in the post-9/11 years, the agency still devoted resources to the narcotics fight, which was about to heat up in Mexico. In 2006, newly elected Mexican President Felipe Calderón declared war on Mexico's drug cartels and turned to Washington for backup. The following year, Calderón and U.S. President George W. Bush met to discuss a sweeping new security agreement that became known as the Mérida Initiative.

As the two countries increased collaboration, the CIA helped set up joint U.S.-Mexico intelligence centers in Mexico City and in Monterrey, less than a three-hour drive from Laredo, Texas. The centers targeted senior cartel leaders, and were modeled on the intel hubs that the CIA and the U.S. military operated in Iraq, said Guillermo Valdés, the head of Mexico's civilian spy agency from 2007 to 2011.

"The Mexicans who worked at the centers went to Iraq to train, to see it live," Valdés said.

While continuing to work with the army unit, the U.S. spy agency also partnered

with a special Mexican Navy intelligence group, according to current and former U.S. and Mexican officials. The CIA gave the naval officers analysis training and technical assistance and screened and polygraphed the group's members, according to a senior Mexican government official with knowledge of the unit's operations. Reuters is withholding the secretive group's name at the request of Mexican and U.S. officials, who said that disclosing it could imperil its members.

The Mexican Navy said in a statement that it "maintains knowledge exchange and cooperation with navies, maritime forces, and other agencies from various countries," to strengthen operational capabilities and collaboration on regional security.

At the time, the U.S. spy agency also had vetted units scattered across some of Mexico's most important civilian institutions. There were units inside the federal police, the attorney general's office, and a state-level police force in the northeastern state of Nuevo León, former U.S. and Mexican officials said.

Mexico's federal police force was disbanded in 2019. Nuevo León's state police force did not answer Reuters' questions about whether the CIA vetted unit still exists; a spokesperson said that all coordination with foreign governments is handled by federal authorities. The federal attorney general's office did not respond to requests for comment.

Several U.S. law enforcement agencies also operated anti-narcotics vetted units in Mexico. In addition, the DEA developed a tight partnership with Mexican Navy special forces.

The DEA said in a statement that its mission overseas is "to work in partnership with host-nation and regional counterparts," including through information sharing, capacity building and training initiatives.

Asked whether U.S. law enforcement's focus on taking down cartel kingpins led to increased bloodshed in Mexico, the DEA said that trafficking organizations are the ones driving the violence. "Attributing it to any single enforcement approach oversimplifies a complex challenge," the statement said.



A member of a collective searching for missing persons pastes images of the disappeared, during a protest outside the Senate in Mexico City, Mexico April 10, 2025.



Jury foreperson hands a verdict sheet to the courtroom deputy, in the trial of Mexico's former Public Security Minister Genaro García Luna on charges that he accepted millions of dollars to protect the powerful Sinaloa Cartel, once run by imprisoned drug lord Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, at a courthouse in New York City, U.S., February 21, 2023 in this courtroom sketch.

By the mid-2010s, all eyes were on one of the biggest kingpins of all: El Chapo. Since his 2001 escape, he'd risen to become one of the world's most successful drug traffickers. Mexican authorities recaptured him in February 2014, but he escaped anew in July 2015. The hunt was on again.

The U.S. spy agency furnished the CIA vetted navy unit with information gathered from telecommunications intercepts, according to the senior Mexican official with knowledge of the unit's operations. This intel helped Mexican authorities track El Chapo to Los Mochis, Sinaloa. The CIA vetted navy unit then launched an undercover operation to confirm El Chapo's location, the official said.

In January 2016, Mexican Navy special forces arrested him. It was heralded as a victory for the Mexican government and for U.S. law enforcement agencies, which played crucial roles

in supporting the Mexican-led capture operation.

But behind the scenes, U.S. and Mexican officials say the CIA was an important but silent actor. The senior Mexican official said: "They're focused on the mission, but they're invisible."

El Chapo's lawyer Mariel Colón did not respond to requests for comment.

### Polygraph Vetting

The CIA vets the Mexicans it works with in efforts to prevent corruption. In addition to a U.S.-administered polygraph test, the agency in the past has used drug tests, screening interviews, background checks, and, at times, surveillance of soldiers' phones and bank accounts.

GAIN's members also assume fake identities to prevent narcos from using threats against the soldiers or their families in order to extract information. "In the six years I was in

charge of the unit, even my name wasn't known. I was a ghost," said Aguilera, the former Mexican leader of the CIA vetted army unit.

Three soldiers from the vetted unit were jailed for allegedly leaking information to the cartels during the early 2000s, Aguilera said.

But cartel infiltration wasn't unique to Langley's units. For decades, the U.S. government has found that some of its closest partners in Mexico are entangled with the very cartels they are supposedly fighting.

Case in point: Genaro García Luna. From 2006 to 2012, as Mexico's security minister, García Luna was a close ally to Washington. He worked with not only the CIA but also with U.S. law enforcement and U.S. diplomats. He oversaw the federal police, where the CIA had a small vetted unit. In 2011, Leon Panetta, then chief of the CIA, wrote García Luna person-

ally to thank him for the "professionalism and hospitality that you have shown to me and the CIA."

The Americans later turned on him. In 2019, U.S. authorities arrested him in Texas. U.S. prosecutors accused him of accepting millions in bribes from none other than the Sinaloa Cartel. In 2023, García Luna was convicted of cocaine trafficking-related charges. He is imprisoned in a so-called "Supermax" facility in Colorado serving a 38-year sentence.

García Luna's defense lawyer, César de Castro, contacted last week for comment, said it would be impossible to reach his client on short notice.

### Fentanyl Failure

In 2017, Trump began his first term as president and wanted to get tough on Mexico. He had big ideas, like dropping bombs on traffickers or sending in U.S. special forces. "He was throwing things at the wall to see what stuck," recalled a former senior White House official.

In the end, the task largely fell to the CIA. The spy agency's Mexico station received a \$200 million funding boost, according to two former DEA agents who worked on Mexico. The U.S. spy agency ramped up drug operations and used the extra cash to fund new equipment and training for its units and to pay sources, said one of the former DEA agents. Reuters was not able to independently confirm that funding increase.

The CIA received another, and far more surprising, windfall in 2018. That's when leftist president Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office promising to scale back the drug war and instead address the poverty that drives people to join cartels in the first place. Some 13 million Mexicans rose out of poverty during his six years in office, according to government data.

Meanwhile, he publicly iced out the DEA and sidelined the Mexican Navy and its special forces unit, which had been the DEA's main Mexican counterpart, according to former U.S. and Mexican officials.

But anti-narcotics cooperation with Washington didn't cease entirely. Instead, the CIA's role in such operations grew after López Obrador put the Mexican Army at the fore-

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*Continued from page 22.*

front of the nation's security efforts. The vetted CIA unit inside the army once again came to the forefront of the joint Mexican-U.S. anti-narcotics efforts, according to current and former security sources.

That partnership offered a convenient way for the Mexican leader to appease the Americans without appearing to renege on his campaign promises, said a former U.S. diplomat stationed in Mexico at the time. "If you work with the CIA, presumably nobody's ever going to know what you did," the diplomat said.

López Obrador did not respond to a detailed list of questions about his drug war strategy.

Inside the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City, a turf war broke out between the DEA and the CIA amid the shifting power balance, according to a half-dozen American officials. Meanwhile, outside the U.S. compound, the rise of fentanyl was upending the international drug market.

The powerful synthetic opioid is about 50 times stronger than heroin, cheap and relatively easy to produce. At the beginning of Trump's first term, street fentanyl largely arrived on U.S. shores directly from China. But Mexican cartels had already begun to import fentanyl-making chemicals and were learning how to cook up the drug.

Leading this effort were Ovidio Guzmán and his brothers, according to U.S. authorities. After their father's 2016 arrest, the brothers fought off rivals to emerge as serious players inside the cartel. They



Director of National Intelligence (DNI) Tulsi Gabbard (Center), CIA Director John Ratcliffe (Second from right), FBI Director Kash Patel (Second from left), U.S. Air Force General and Director of the National Security Agency (NSA) Timothy Haugh and U.S. Air Force Lt. General and Director of the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) Jeffrey Kruse testify before a Senate Intelligence Committee hearing on worldwide threats, on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., U.S., March 25, 2025.

were dubbed Los Chapitos, or little Chapos, and they made an early bet on the synthetic opioid. Within a few years, their foresight would turn them into the world's largest fentanyl producers, according to U.S. authorities.

But the CIA had its eyes elsewhere. As traffickers were laying the groundwork for Mexico's fentanyl industry, some of Langley's drug analysts were convinced that the cartels planned to ratchet up heroin production instead, according to a half-dozen former U.S. intelligence and diplomatic sources. U.S. officials leaned on the Mexican government to step up eradication of poppies cultivated in rural Mexico. Others inside the CIA were focused on stopping South American cocaine – then a priority of

the Trump administration – flowing north.

There was little time to chase potential new drug threats. "We missed it," said the former longtime CIA officer in Latin America.

Langley wasn't alone. U.S. law enforcement and health agencies were also caught by surprise by the rapid rise and staggering body count of fentanyl. Over Trump's first term in office, synthetic opioid deaths surged to more than 56,000 fatalities in 2020, double the figure from 2017, according to data from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. All told, about 450,000 Americans have died from synthetic opioids over the last decade.

**The Hunt Continues**

In late 2019, the CIA vet-

ted army unit, GAIN, spearheaded the Mexican government's first attempt to capture Ovidio Guzmán. For months, its soldiers had trailed Ovidio and built a vast file on his cars, homes and schedule, according to a source familiar with the operation. Finally, on October 17, the Mexican Army launched a last-minute operation that was led by GAIN. The soldiers captured Ovidio. But the situation quickly descended into chaos.

Hundreds of cartel gunmen descended on Culiacán, the capital of Sinaloa. The Mexican soldiers in the CIA vetted unit found themselves trapped. The Sinaloa Cartel's men set cars ablaze and threatened to storm the military building that housed the families of soldiers stationed locally. López Obrador ordered the army to release Ovidio to prevent civilian deaths. The fiasco caused a scandal in Mexico.

López Obrador publicly chastised the raid's architects and had his army chief release the name of GAIN's leader during a news conference. It was an unprecedented disclosure, given the danger of cartel retaliation for soldiers in such a position. But neither the president nor the army revealed GAIN's relationship to the CIA.

In the U.S., the overdose death toll soared as Mexico's cartels ramped up fentanyl production. Ovidio and his brothers built an industrial-scale opera-

tion in Sinaloa. At Langley, the CIA transformed its counternarcotics center to tackle fentanyl's entire supply chain, according to 2023 testimony by then-director William Burns to a U.S. Senate committee. The leaders of the Sinaloa Cartel, specifically Los Chapitos, were some of the top targets, according to two former senior U.S. officials briefed on the counternarcotic center's efforts.

In August 2022, American surveillance planes flying over Culiacán picked up encrypted cartel communications and the CIA stepped in to decode the chatter, according to a former U.S. law enforcement agent who worked on the case. Reuters is withholding certain details about the intercept at the request of U.S. officials, who said disclosure could jeopardize Mexican and U.S. sources and methods.

The decrypted communications helped lead U.S. authorities to a heavily guarded compound in the mountain village of Jesús María. On Jan. 5, 2023, the CIA vetted army unit, GAIN, and hundreds of soldiers were deployed in Sinaloa to encircle Ovidio's hideout. Learning from the mistakes of the last operation, the military struck in the dead of night and deployed attack helicopters that strafed cartel hitmen from the air. In total, 29 people, including 10 Mexican soldiers, were killed in the operation. Mexico extradited Ovidio

to the U.S. later that year. In July, he pleaded guilty to four charges related to drug distribution and participating in a criminal enterprise. He faces a possible life sentence. His lawyer, Jeffrey Lichtman, did not respond to requests for comment.

In the U.S., overdose fatalities due to synthetic opioids began declining sharply in late 2023, due in large part to initiatives to distribute the overdose-reversal drug naloxone. Since Trump returned to power this year, his health-care funding cuts have hit drug treatment programmes, initiatives to distribute naloxone and studies that track drug consumption nationwide. U.S. overdose data is available only through March 2025, when the funding cuts began, making it too soon to tell if there has been an impact on deaths.

Since Trump returned to office, fentanyl seizures at the U.S. border are down more than 50% compared to the same period last year, according to data from U.S. Customs and Border Protection. The administration has said that's thanks to its crackdown. But determining the cause for that drop is difficult, according to a U.S. official, who said cartels could be using new smuggling routes to evade detection or stockpiling the synthetic opioid in hopes that border enforcement will eventually cool off.

In Mexico, homicides are also trending downward nationwide since Sheinbaum took office. Still, a year-long civil war within the Sinaloa Cartel has left thousands dead or missing in Sinaloa. Los Chapitos are battling another faction led by the son of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, who co-founded the Sinaloa Cartel with El Chapo. The El Mayo wing is poised to take over Los Chapitos' fentanyl production, although it faces competition from the rival Jalisco New Generation Cartel, a U.S. official said.

The CIA's decades-long hunt for the Guzmán clan isn't over yet. One of the agency's principal targets is Iván Archivaldo Guzmán, another one of El Chapo's sons who remains at large and could not be reached for comment.

In February, elite Mexican commandos working with the CIA vetted army unit nearly nabbed him in Culiacán, according to a Mexican security source. Iván escaped, like his father often did, through a secret tunnel.



Cartel gunmen stand outside a convenience store amid clashes with federal forces following the detention of Ovidio Guzman, son of drug kingpin Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, in Culiacán, Sinaloa state, Mexico October 17, 2019.

# Belarus releases 52 prisoners after Trump appeal, US eases some sanctions on Minsk

VILNIUS--Belarus freed 52 prisoners including an EU employee on Thursday after an appeal from U.S. President Donald Trump, as Washington and Minsk flirted with a rapprochement that many European leaders have viewed sceptically.

Trump had previously urged Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, to release detainees whom the U.S. leader has described as "hostages".

Trump has increased U.S. engagement with the authoritarian state, sending multiple delegations to Minsk this year. His predecessor, former President Joe Biden, sought to further isolate the eastern European nation after it

served as a staging ground for Russia's 2022 expanded invasion of Ukraine.

In return for Lukashenko's gesture, Washington will grant sanctions relief to Belarus' national airline, Belavia, allowing it to service and buy components for its aircraft, which include Boeing airplanes, a White House official said.

It was the biggest batch of prisoners pardoned by the authoritarian leader, who is seeking to repair relations with the U.S. after years of isolation and sanctions. But it was far short of the 1,300 or 1,400 prisoners whose release Trump had called for in a conversation with Lukashenko last month and in subsequent social media posts.

Belarus's exiled opposition said one of the 52, Mikola

Statkevich, had refused to enter Lithuania, where the released prisoners were brought. Webcam footage showed him sitting in the no-man's zone at the border, and Lithuania's border guard said he remained in Belarus.

It was not immediately clear why Statkevich, who ran against Lukashenko in a 2010 election, had refused to cross, but the exiled opposition says freed political prisoners should have the right to stay in Belarus rather than submit to what it says amount to forced deportations.

John Coale, who led the U.S. delegation to Minsk, told Reuters in an interview he hoped for the release of all those prisoners, adding that he believed Lukashenko wanted to change.



A prisoner released from Belarus speaks on the phone as he arrives at the U.S. embassy in Vilnius, Lithuania, on Thursday.

"But you don't change after you've been in office for some 30 years. It's not going to happen overnight," Coale added.

Coale was accompanied to Belarus by Christopher Smith, a deputy assistant secretary of state, according

to a senior U.S. official.

Those released on Thursday included Ihar Losik, 33, a journalist sentenced in 2021 to 15 years in a penal colony on charges of inciting hatred and organising riots. Prominent critics of Lukashenko's decades-old

rule, such as human rights campaigner Ales Bialiatski, co-winner of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize, or Maria Kalesnikava, a leader of the 2020 pro-democracy protests, were not among those released.



German troops are seen in Rukla, Lithuania August 25 2017.

# Germany's army needs to more than double in size, commander believes

BERLIN--Germany's army needs to add 100,000 active troops to its existing 62,000 to meet new NATO targets intended to boost preparedness for the growing threat of Russian aggression, its commander says in a confidential paper seen by Reuters on Thursday.

"It is imperative for the army to become sufficiently ready for war by 2029 and provide the capabilities Germany pledged (to NATO) by 2035," Army Chief Alfons Mais wrote in a letter dated September 2, addressed to the chief of the defence staff, Carsten Breuer.

He said achieving these

objectives was impossible with currently approved personnel levels, which also include 37,000 non-active troops. Germany has already begun increasing its commitments to allies in eastern Europe, not least with the establishment of a German brigade in Lithuania, set to number some 5,000 troops, and a naval patrol deployment in the Baltic to counter undersea sabotage.

Mais called for an increase of roughly 45,000 active troops by 2029 - the year the U.S.-led alliance has said it expects Russia to be capable of a large-scale attack on Western allies.

Moscow has consistently denied any intention to wage war against NATO or its members.

Additionally, to meet NATO targets agreed at a summit in June and build reserves for a war of attrition of the kind Russia is waging in Ukraine, Mais projected a requirement for another 45,000 active troops by 2035. He also called for some 10,000 extra troops to bolster territorial defence.

A spokesperson for the Defence Ministry in Berlin declined to comment on the document, citing its confidential nature.

# Britain's Mandelson fired as US ambassador over Epstein links

LONDON--Peter Mandelson, Britain's urbane ambassador to the U.S., was sacked by Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Thursday after a trove of emails revealed the depth of his ties with the late convicted U.S. sex offender Jeffrey Epstein.

Known for his behind-the-scenes manoeuvring during a career lasting over three decades, Mandelson was forced from Britain's most desirable diplomatic post after some of his letters and emails to Epstein were revealed this week.

Starmer, struggling in opinion polls after numerous setbacks, had strongly backed his ambassador on Wednesday as a state visit by U.S. President Donald Trump, with whom Mandelson had developed strong ties, looms next week. Trump has also faced questions about his links with Epstein, with the White House denying that an alleged birthday letter from him to the late financier is authentic.

Mandelson, who was key to the Labour Party's success when Tony Blair was prime minister, had come under scrutiny after U.S. lawmakers released documents including a letter calling Epstein "my best pal". Emails were then published in the media showing that Mandelson had advised Epstein



U.S. President Donald Trump shakes hands with Britain's ambassador to the United States, Peter Mandelson after announcing a trade deal with the U.K., in the Oval Office at the White House in Washington, D.C., U.S., May 8, 2025.

to fight for early release in 2008 when he was about to be sentenced to 18 months in jail for soliciting a minor. "The emails show that the depth and extent of Peter Mandelson's relationship with Jeffrey Epstein is materially different from that known at the time of his appointment," Britain's foreign ministry said.

The reporting of Mandelson's suggestion that Epstein's first conviction was wrongful and should be challenged was "new information", it said, adding that Starmer had asked for his removal.

On Wednesday, Mandelson had said he deeply regretted ever meeting Epstein, and that he had carried on the association "for far longer than I should

have done", suggesting he had believed the lies of a "charismatic criminal liar".

Epstein, who died in prison in 2019, had counted princes and the political elite among his friends, many of whom have since been tarred by the association. Britain's Prince Andrew, a younger brother of King Charles, was removed from official royal duties over his ties to Epstein. He denies any wrongdoing.

Mandelson's statement initially seemed to satisfy the prime minister. Starmer had heaped praise on Mandelson, the first political appointee to the position in almost half a century, for his efforts in securing a trade deal with the United States.



A coast guard boat of the Venezuelan Navy patrols along the Caribbean coast on the day Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro says that his country would deploy military, police and civilian defenses at 284 "battlefront" locations across the country, amid heightened tensions with the U.S., in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, on Thursday.

## People killed in US boat strike were not Tren de Aragua, Venezuela minister says

CARACAS--None of the 11 people killed in a U.S. military strike on a boat in the Caribbean last week were members of Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua, Venezuela's interior minister said on Thursday, as the South American nation deployed troops amid heightened tensions with the U.S.

The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump has said the boat was transporting illegal narcotics, but has provided scant further information about the incident, even amid demands from members of the U.S. Congress for a justification for the action.

"They openly confessed to killing 11 people," Interior Minister and ruling party head Diosdado Cabello said on state television. "We have done our investigations here in our country and there are the families of the disappeared people who want their relatives, and when we asked in the towns, none were from Tren de Aragua, none were drug traffickers."

"A murder has been com-

mitted against a group of citizens using lethal force," added Cabello, questioning how the U.S. could determine whether drugs were on the boat and why the people were not instead arrested.

The Venezuelan government said after the incident that a video post by Trump of the strike was artificial intelligence. "These were evil Tren de Aragua narco-terrorists trying to bring illegal drugs into our country and kill Americans," White House spokeswoman Anna Kelly said in response to questions.

Kelly said Maduro is not the legitimate president of Venezuela and that he is a "fugitive." The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said early on Thursday his country would deploy military, police and civilian defenses at 284 "battlefront" locations across the country, his latest show of military capacity.

The Trump administration has ratcheted up the

U.S. military presence in the southern Caribbean as part of what it says is a crackdown on drug smugglers, and ordered the deployment of 10 F-35 fighter jets to a Puerto Rico airfield. Maduro, who has alleged the U.S. military is hoping to drive him from power, did not say how many military, police or civilian militias would participate in the new deployment.

His government has already announced an increase of 25,000 troops for states along Venezuela's border with Colombia that are drug trafficking hubs. "We're ready for an armed fight, if it's necessary," Maduro said from Ciudad Caribia, on the country's central coast, in an early morning broadcast on state television where he was flanked by his defense minister.

"Along all the Venezuelan coasts, from the border with Colombia to the east of the country, from north to south and east to west, we have a full preparation of official troops," he said.

# South Sudan VP charged with treason and murder

NAIROBI--South Sudan's First Vice President Riek Machar has been charged with murder, treason and crimes against humanity for his alleged involvement in attacks by an ethnic militia against federal forces in March, the justice minister said on Thursday.

Hours after the minister's announcement, President Salva Kiir suspended Machar from his post, a decree read on state radio said, without giving more details.

The charges against Machar and his suspension escalate a feud between the country's two main political camps - the other led by Kiir - which faced off in a 2013-2018 civil war in which an estimated 400,000 people died. Kiir also suspended Petroleum Minister Puot Kang Chol, who was charged alongside Machar, the decree said.

Machar has been under house arrest since March in connection with attacks by the White Army militia in the northeastern town of Nasir. International powers have repeatedly called for Machar's release, warning his detention could tip the country back into civil war.

"Evidence further reveals that the White Army operated under the command and influence of certain leaders of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-in Opposition (SPLM/A-IO), including Dr. Riek Machar Teny," Justice Minister Joseph Geng told reporters.

"While the government of the Republic of South Sudan appreciates the engagement of international partners, public and media on the Nasir incident, this matter is now sub judice," he said.

Kiir and Machar had served in a unity government as part

of a peace deal that ended the civil war, but their partnership remained tenuous and sporadic violence has continued between the two sides.

Besides Machar, 20 other people were indicted in the case. Thirteen of those are at large, Geng said.

Edmund Yakani, executive director of Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, a South Sudan activist group, said in statement that he hoped the court trying Machar and the seven others would be fair and "a competent court of law, not a kangaroo court of law."

## Netanyahu signs West Bank settlement expansion plan

JERUSALEM--Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu signed an agreement on Thursday to push ahead with a controversial settlement expansion plan that would cut across land that the Palestinians seek for a state.

"There will never be a Palestinian state. This place is ours," Netanyahu said during a visit to the Maale Adumim settlement in the West Bank where thousands of new housing units would be added. "We will safeguard our heritage, our land, and our security."

Last month, the E1 project, which would bisect the occupied West Bank and cut it off from East Jerusalem, received final approval from a Defence Ministry planning commission. Netanyahu was joined by nationalist members of his coalition, including far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, who in August said a Palestinian state "is being erased from the table, not with slogans but with actions."

The move, coming two days after Israel tried to kill Hamas leaders in Qatar and was roundly condemned, may add to already strained

relations with many of its allies. Restarting the project could further isolate Israel, which has watched some Western allies frustrated by its continuation and planned escalation of the Gaza war announce they may recognise a Palestinian state at the United Nations General Assembly later this month.

E1 is located adjacent to Maale Adumim and was frozen in 2012 and 2020 amid objections from the U.S. and European governments. Total investment in the project, which will include adding roads and upgrading major infrastructure, is estimated at nearly \$1 billion.

Western capitals and campaign groups have opposed the settlement project due to concerns that it could undermine a future peace deal with the Palestinians. The two-state solution to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict envisages a Palestinian state in East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza, existing side by side with Israel. Most of the international community considers Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal under international law.

## UN Security Council, with American support, condemns strikes on Qatar

UNITED NATIONS--The United Nations Security Council on Thursday condemned recent strikes on Qatar's capital Doha, but did not mention Israel in the statement agreed to by all 15 members, including Israel's ally the United States.

Israel attempted to kill the political leaders of Hamas with the attack on Tuesday, escalating its military action in what the United States described as a unilateral attack that does not advance U.S. and Israeli interests.

"This strike sends a message that should echo across this chamber. There is no sanctuary for terrorists, not in Gaza, not

in Tehran, not in Doha. There is no immunity for terrorists," Israel's U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon told a Security Council meeting on the attack. "We will act against the leaders of terror wherever they are hiding."

The United States traditionally shields its ally Israel at the United Nations. U.S. backing for the Security Council statement, which could only be approved by consensus, reflects President Donald Trump's unhappiness with the attack ordered by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Council members underscored the importance of de-

escalation and expressed their solidarity with Qatar. They underlined their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Qatar," read the statement, drafted by Britain and France.

The widely condemned Doha operation was especially sensitive because Qatar has been hosting and mediating negotiations aimed at securing a ceasefire in the Gaza war. "Council members underscored that releasing the hostages, including those killed by Hamas, and ending the war and suffering in Gaza must remain our top priority," the Security Council statement read.



Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon holds a picture as he addresses delegates during an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council, following an Israeli attack on Hamas leaders in Doha, Qatar, at U.N. headquarters in New York City, U.S., on Thursday.

# In Colombia coca-growing region, transition to peace is stumbling

EL PLATEADO/SAN JUAN DE MICAY, Colombia--The dilapidated, tin-roofed schoolhouse sits perched amid fields of coca, the base ingredient in cocaine, in the small southwestern Colombian town of San Juan de Micay.

Reached by an unpaved road that meanders through treacherous mountain passes, the town is located in the Canon del Micay, a drug-trafficking hub that is the site of frequent combat between the army and the Estado Mayor Central, a faction of leftist rebels who reject a 2016 peace deal. "Here there is state abandonment. Here the government never brings us anything," said community leader Fernanda Rivera, as she sat at one of the school's desks.

The town lacks running water, sewage treatment and

paved roads, she said, and electricity is intermittent. The rebels are the de facto government, imposing a 9 p.m. curfew and mediating conflicts between neighbors.

It was not supposed to be this way. Leftist President Gustavo Petro came to office in 2022 promising agreements with splinter rebel groups - stubborn holdouts from the landmark 2016 pact that brought peace to some of Colombia after decades of strife.

Last year, with little tangible progress on further peace deals, he pivoted to a new strategy, pledging that regions still controlled by the groups, many rife with coca growing, would be tamed through massive social and military intervention. The Canon del Micay was the tip of the spear and would get an amped-up presence of troops

and \$30 million for schools, hospitals, housing, roads and internet.

The government also planned to pay farmers to eradicate their coca crops and instead plant coffee, cacao, beans and fruits. But residents in the region who spoke to Reuters said the military was struggling to dislodge the rebels and the promised spending has not arrived.

Soldiers and police have been attacked by rebels and repeatedly held hostage - including this month - by residents the government says were pressured by guerrillas. Large harvests of coca continue.

Petro's office passed a Reuters request for comment to the government's Social Prosperity department, which acknowledged the armed forces have not yet



A guerrilla of Colombian rebel group Estado Mayor Central, Carlos Patino Front, a dissident of the former FARC guerrilla group, stands guard on a highway, in Canon del Micay, Colombia August 5, 2025.

consolidated territorial control. The defense ministry said the EMC's use of small units to launch rapid attacks had put the brakes on social spending.

Projects require approval through an arduous public planning process at a time

when Colombia is facing a fiscal crisis and an expanding national deficit. The failure to date of the government's strategy puts at risk crucial anti-narcotics funding from the United States. U.S. President Donald Trump has already threatened to "decertify" - potentially this month - Petro's drug containment efforts as ineffective and Republican representative Mario Diaz-Balart has proposed a 50% cut in non-military aid, to \$209 million, because of Petro's failure to "effectively utilize United States assistance in advancing shared goals."

A spokesperson for the

U.S. State Department said it had nothing to preview about Trump's determination. Colombia's ambassador to Washington, Daniel Garcia-Pena, told reporters this week that funding from the U.S. had already been hit by the dismantling of US-AID and that the U.S. could choose to cut about \$100 million of programmes not focused on drug trafficking if Trump decides to decertify Colombia.

"It would hurt our efforts. It would hurt the United States," Garcia-Pena said. "It would only help transnational criminal organizations."

## Albania appoints AI bot as minister to tackle corruption

PRISTINA--A new minister in Albania charged to handle public procurement will be impervious to bribes, threats, or attempts to curry favour. That is because Diella, as she is called, is an AI-generated bot.

Prime Minister Edi Rama, who is about to begin his fourth term, said on Thursday that Diella, which means "sun" in Albanian, will manage and award all public tenders in which the government contracts private companies for various projects.

"Diella is the first cabinet member who isn't physically present, but is virtually created by AI," Rama said during a speech unveiling his new cabinet. She will help make Albania "a country where public tenders are 100% free of corruption."

The awarding of such contracts has long been a source of corruption scandals in Albania, a Balkan country that experts say is a hub for gangs seeking to launder their money from trafficking drugs and weapons across the world, and where graft has reached the corridors of power. That image has complicated Albania's accession to the European Union, which Rama wants to achieve by 2030 but which political analysts say is ambitious.

The government did not provide details of what human oversight there might be for Diella, or address risks that someone could manipulate the artificial intelligence bot.



Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte is seen on a screen in the courtroom of the International Criminal Court (ICC) with his lawyer Salvador Medialdea seated left, in The Hague, Netherlands, Friday, March 14, 2025.

## Duterte defence says ex-Philippine leader suffers deteriorating cognitive condition

THE HAGUE--Lawyers for detained former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte say he suffers from significant cognitive deficiencies that affect his memory and daily functioning, documents made public by the International Criminal Court on Thursday showed.

Duterte, 80, was arrested and taken to The Hague in March on an arrest warrant that linked him to murders committed during his "war on drugs" where thousands of alleged narcotics peddlers and users were killed. His lawyers have since then argued he is unfit to stand trial.

According to details from their August 18 defence request released on Thursday, the condition affects his executive functioning, orientation and his capacity for complex reasoning. Duterte has maintained his arrest was unlawful and tantamount to kidnapping.

Earlier this week, judges postponed hearings on the confirmation of the charges against Duterte set for later this month to deal first with the defence request to rule on the former president's fitness for trial. It is not known when the judges will rule if the ICC case can go ahead. Many details and the exact medical condition

underlying the alleged cognitive decline have been redacted in court documents.

It is rare for international courts to find suspects, even increasingly elderly suspects, wholly unfit for trial. If a suspect is declared unfit for trial that may not automatically lead to their release.

In 2023 a United Nations' war crimes tribunal ruled elderly Rwandan genocide suspect Felicien Kabuga was unfit to stand trial because he has dementia. Kabuga remains in the U.N. detention unit in The Hague as no state has been willing to accept him for provisional release.

## Baltic states prepare push to save US security assistance

WASHINGTON--The parliaments of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia are preparing a joint letter asking key committee heads in the U.S. Congress to save a major security assistance programme in the face of ongoing Russian threats, according to a draft of the note and two people familiar with the effort.

The bid to salvage the Baltic Security Initiative comes as Eastern Europe and the Baltic states confront increasingly severe threats. On Wednesday, Poland shot down suspected Russian drones in its airspace with support from its NATO allies, the first time a member of the Western military alliance is known to have fired shots during Russia's war in Ukraine.

All three Baltic nations share a border with Russia. Lithuania in August wrote to NATO asking it to help strengthen its air defenses, after two military drones crossed into its territory from Belarus, a close Russian ally.

The BSI began in 2020 during Trump's first term as a response to rising security

threats in the region after Russia's 2014 invasion of Ukraine. The programme has recently provided the Baltic nations with around \$220 million in security assistance funding, though the amount has varied by year.

But at a meeting with European officials in late August, Pentagon officials said they did not intend to fund the programme during the next fiscal year. They also said they planned to eliminate security assistance funds administered by the U.S. European Command area generally, according to European and U.S. officials with knowledge of the meeting.

The Baltic letter, a draft of which was seen by Reuters, asks that Congress pass legislation codifying and funding the BSI, despite the Pentagon's intention to eliminate the programme. The letter notes that the Baltic countries spend well over the minimum thresholds on defense set by NATO, and that they play a key role in resisting Russian and Belarusian aggression. It also notes the U.S. has a significant Baltic community.

# Bolsonaro sentenced to 27 years jail after landmark coup plot conviction

BRASILIA--Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was sentenced on Thursday to 27 years and three months in prison hours after being convicted of plotting a coup to remain in power after losing the 2022 election, dealing a powerful rebuke to one of the world's most prominent far-right populist leaders.

The conviction ruling by a panel of five justices on Brazil's Supreme Court, who also agreed on the sentence, made the 70-year-old Bolsonaro the first former president in the country's history to be convicted for attacking democracy, and drew disapproval from the Trump administration.

"This criminal case is almost a meeting between Brazil and its past, its present and its future," Justice Carmen Lucia said before her vote to convict Bolsonaro, referring to a history checkered with

military coups and attempts to overthrow democracy.

There was ample evidence that Bolsonaro, who is currently under house arrest, acted "with the purpose of eroding democracy and institutions," she added.

Four of the five judges voted to convict the former president of five crimes: taking part in an armed criminal organization; attempting to violently abolish democracy; organizing a coup; and damaging government property and protected cultural assets.

The conviction of Bolsonaro, a former army captain who never hid his admiration for the military dictatorship that killed hundreds of Brazilians between 1964 and 1985, follows legal condemnations for other far-right leaders this year, including France's Marine Le Pen and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte. It may further

enrage Bolsonaro's close ally U.S. President Donald Trump, who had called the case a "witch hunt" and in retaliation hit Brazil with tariff hikes, sanctions against the presiding judge, and the revocation of visas for most of the high court justices.

Asked about the conviction on Thursday, Trump again praised Bolsonaro, calling the verdict a terrible thing. "I think it's very bad for Brazil," he added.

As he watched his father's conviction from the U.S., Brazilian Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro told Reuters he expected Trump to consider imposing further sanctions on Brazil and its high court justices. U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on X the court had "unjustly ruled," adding: "The United States will respond accordingly to this witch hunt."



Karan Kulung, 18, a student who participated in a Gen-Z protest, pose for a picture in front of a burnt bus as he takes part in a cleaning campaign following Monday's deadly anti-corruption protests in Kathmandu, Nepal, September 10, 2025. "Earlier, I thought I would go abroad to pursue opportunities, as I felt there was no future here after completing my high school but now my perspective has changed, my goal is to contribute to building Nepal and creating a better future here," said Karan Kulung.

# Nepal protesters back former chief justice as interim head

KATHMANDU--Nepal's "Gen Z" protesters backed the country's first female chief justice to temporarily lead the troubled nation and called for parliament to be dissolved on Thursday, two days after deadly demonstrations forced the prime minister to quit.

Sushila Karki, 73, who was the first woman to be appointed Nepal's chief justice in 2016 and is now retired, has been the frontrunner to become interim leader of the impoverished Himalayan country, which is wedged between India and China. Her name had been proposed to the president and army by those leading the protests, a representative of the protesters, Ojaswi Raj Thapa, told reporters.

constitutional route to appoint her, a source familiar with the matter told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. Local media reported that Karki was in talks with President Ramchandra Paudel and army chief Ashok Raj Sigdel.

Paudel said he was making every effort to resolve the "current difficult situation" within the constitutional framework and to protect democracy and maintain peace and order. "I appeal to all parties to be confident that a solution to the problem is being sought as soon as possible to address the demands of the agitating citizens and

to cooperate with restraint in maintaining peace and order in the country," he said in a statement.

"We see Sushila Karki for who she truly is — honest, fearless, and unshaken," said Sujit Kumar Jha, a 34-year-old company secretary.

However, another source who declined to be named said protesters were still seeking to reach a unanimous decision and that not everybody backed Karki's candidacy. Karki did not respond to telephone calls from Reuters to seek comment. An army spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



A Filipino fisherman rows a boat during a trip near the disputed Scarborough Shoal, in Masinloc, Zambales province, Philippines.

# Philippines slams China's plan for nature reserve in disputed shoal

MANILA--The Philippines on Thursday condemned China's plan to establish a nature reserve in a South China Sea shoal, calling it a "clear pretext for occupation", as Beijing moves to reinforce sweeping territorial claims across the waterway.

China has approved the creation of a national nature reserve at the disputed Scarborough Shoal. The designation was an "important guarantee" to preserve the atoll's ecosystem, China's State Council said.

China's plan was "patently illegal" and less about environmental protection and more about justifying control over the disputed shoal,

Philippine National Security Adviser Eduardo Ano said. "It is a clear pretext towards eventual occupation," Ano said in a statement.

The Philippine foreign ministry said China's action "clearly infringes" on Manila's rights and interests. "The Philippines will be issuing a formal diplomatic protest against this illegitimate and unlawful action by China," it said in a statement.

Manila, a U.S. ally, also called on Beijing to withdraw the designation and comply with international law, including the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Manila's foreign ministry said the Philippines

has sovereignty and jurisdiction over the shoal, which it calls Bajo de Masinloc, describing it as a "longstanding and integral part" of the Philippines.

Asked about Manila's comments, China's foreign ministry said it did not accept the "unreasonable" accusations and "so-called" protests from the Philippines. China urges the Philippine side to "effectively stop the relevant infringement, provocation, and wanton hype, and avoid complicating the maritime situation," ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular press conference.

# Crime syndicates may be setting up scam centre in East Timor

JAKARTA--Crime syndicates may be setting up a scam centre in Asia's youngest nation, East Timor, the United Nations said on Thursday, as a multibillion-dollar online fraud industry spreads across Southeast Asia.

The industry involves sprawling compounds housing tens of thousands of workers, many of them trafficked, who are forced to scam victims around the world. Cyber scam operators in Cambodia and Myanmar alone have stolen some \$10 billion from American citizens in the last year, the U.S. Treasury said on Tuesday, as it imposed sanctions on entities in both countries.

In its report, the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said it had found signs pointing to the "establishment and operation" of such

a scam centre in East Timor's Special Administrative Region of Oecusse-Ambeno.

East Timor, commonly known as Timor-Leste, is one of Southeast Asia's poorest nations. At 15,000 sq km (5,800 sq miles), it is slightly bigger than Qatar, with a population of 1.3 million. Its government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On August 25, a raid at a hotel in the Special Region by East Timor intelligence and law-enforcement found individuals with links to scam operations, and evidence including SIM cards and satellite internet devices, the UNODC said, adding: "UNODC's analysis links these operations to entities associated with convicted cybercriminals, offshore gambling operators."

# Stellantis close to final scenario on tariffs with US administration



The all-new 2026 Jeep Cherokee is presented during its reveal event in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, U.S., August 21, 2025.

PARIS--Stellantis CEO Antonio Filosa said on Thursday a final scenario with U.S. tariffs was getting clearer and the French-Italian-American automaker would soon take actions based on that, as he started to sketch out the group's new business plan.

The company, which has a large manufacturing footprint in the U.S., as well as in Mexico and Canada, is holding a "very productive exchange of ideas" with

President Donald Trump's administration, Filosa said in an interview during Kepler Cheuvreux Autumn Conference. The CEO said the tariff environment was not yet 100% defined, but it is "getting clearer and clearer and we are ready to act".

"Our capacity in the United States can accommodate important industrial moves. So we are still working with the administration to create the final scenario and

very soon we'll be able to communicate around that," Filosa said.

Last year, more than 40% of the 1.2 million vehicles Stellantis sold in the United States, its key market, were imports, mostly from Mexico and Canada where Trump has imposed tariffs of 25%. In July, Stellantis warned of a 1.5 billion-euro (\$1.8 billion) hit from U.S. tariffs this year, but pledged new vehicle launches to reconnect with customers as

its new CEO tries to get the automaker back on track after a dismal 2024.

Milan-listed shares in Stellantis extended gains after Filosa's remarks and closed up 9.2%. The CEO, who started in the role in June, added increasing revenues thanks to new models would be a key pillar of Stellantis' future strategy and a way to restore cash generation.

Stellantis is reintroducing models, including Jeep Cherokee and 8-cylinder RAM trucks, after dropping them proved to be one of the causes of the group's declining sales since 2024, Filosa said, adding North American dealers were "screaming" for those models to be back in the range. "The U.S. is priority number one," he said.

Stellantis' new business plan is scheduled to be presented in the first half of next year. "The most urgent objective that we have is to turn the corner on cash generation," he said. "Lever number one is increasing the revenue line."

Stellantis has burnt a total of over 9 billion euros (\$10.6 billion) of cash be-

tween 2024 and the first half of this year following a decline in sales and profits, in particular in its key North American market, which led to an overhang of unsold vehicles and the ousting of former CEO Carlos Tavares.

Filosa said inventories

were now back to "very healthy" levels. "We don't carry any more aged inventory. So model year 2024, mainly all (of) model year 2025 are gone," he said.

Filosa also promised a new RAM mid-sized American truck for the North American market for 2027.

## Hyundai battery plant faces 2-3 month startup delay after raid

DETROIT--A battery plant co-owned by Hyundai Motor 005380.KS is facing a minimum startup delay of two to three months following an immigration raid last week, Hyundai CEO Jose Munoz said on Thursday.

The Georgia plant, which is operated through a joint venture between Hyundai and South Korea's LG Energy Solution, was at the center of the largest single-site enforcement operation in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's history last week.

Munoz, in his first public comments since the raid, said he was surprised when he heard the news and immediately inquired if Hyundai workers were involved. He said the company discovered that the workers at the center

of the raid were mainly employed by suppliers of LG.

"For the construction phase of the plants, you need to get specialized people. There are a lot of skills and equipment that you cannot find in the United States," Munoz said on the sidelines of an automotive conference in Detroit.

The plant, part of a \$7.6 billion factory complex to make battery-powered models, was slated to come online later this year. About 475 workers, including more than 300 South Koreans, were arrested, according to U.S. immigration officials. The raid was conducted over suspicions about the "unlawful" visa and immigration status of workers at the site, U.S. officials have said.

# Sheinbaum: Mexico not looking for conflict over tariff measures

MEXICO CITY--Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum on Thursday said her government was not looking for a conflict with countries on which it plans to increase tariffs, including China.

"We don't want a conflict," Sheinbaum told a morning press conference, adding the measures were intended to boost Mexico's economy and that her government was in talks with ambassadors from countries impacted by the proposed measures.

Her government on Wednesday announced it was raising tariffs on Chinese autos to a maximum level of 50% as part of a broad overhaul of import levies across hundreds of goods, impacting some \$52 billion of imports. The measures against countries with which Mexico does not hold trade deals sparked comments that Mexico had announced these measures in order to appease its top trade partner, the United States.

"That is not the objec-

tive," Sheinbaum said when asked about this during the press conference, saying the measures were intended to strengthen local production capacity as part of an industrial strategy proposed before U.S. President Donald Trump was elected last year.

"What we want is to be able to discuss things without the need to generate any conflict," she added.

Following the measures, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said he hoped the two nations could work together. China opposed restrictions imposed under "various pretexts" and would safeguard its interests, he added.

Mexico's automotive industry association AMIA, meanwhile, welcomed the plan to increase tariffs. "As an industry, we believe that the measure ensures that any company participating in the Mexican market does so under fair conditions," it said in a statement, saying it believed the plan would boost jobs and consumer

guarantees.

Mexico is a major manufacturer of cars that it exports largely to the United States, but it also imports hundreds of thousands of vehicles each year. China exported more than 177,000 automobiles and light trucks to Mexico in the first eight months of this year, according to data from Mexico's national statistics office INEGI, making it by far the largest supplier. U.S. manufacturer General Motors was, however, the largest exporter from China to Mexico. The Chevrolet Aveo was overwhelmingly GM's most shipped vehicle in the first part of this year, the data showed, though a range of pickup trucks, vans and SUVs were also popular.

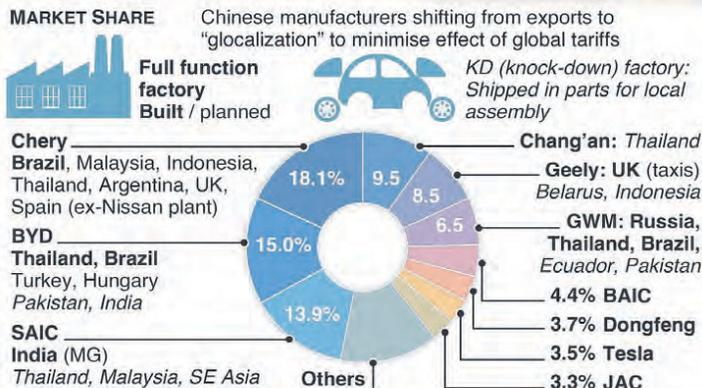
Mexico's economy minister said when announcing the tariff measures that Chinese cars were entering the local market "below what we call reference prices" and that the protectionist measures aimed to make Mexican products more competitive.

## Chinese autos hit by 50% Mexican tariff

The world's biggest buyer of Chinese cars, Mexico, is to introduce a 50% levy, as countries increasingly use tariffs - many under pressure from Washington - to limit China's economic influence



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum - USMCA free-trade deal with U.S. up for review in 2026



### IMF says US economy showing strains; tariffs pose some risks to inflation

WASHINGTON--The U.S. economy is showing some strains after years of resilience, with domestic demand moderating and job growth slowing, the International Monetary Fund said on Thursday.

IMF spokesperson Julie Kozack said inflation was on a path to meet the Federal Reserve's 2% target, but there were some risks that could push it higher, largely as a result of tariffs imposed on imports by the Trump administration.

"What we've seen over the past few years is that the U.S. economy has proven to be quite resilient. We do see now that some strains are beginning to show," she told a regular briefing. "Domestic demand has been moderating in the U.S., and job growth is slowing."

Kozack said the front-loading of imports early in the year in anticipation of tariffs had caused some volatility in economic activity in the first half, and tariffs were now adding to inflation risks. As a result of the combined factors, she said, the IMF saw scope for the Federal Reserve to lower interest rates, although it should proceed cautiously, with an eye on emerging data.

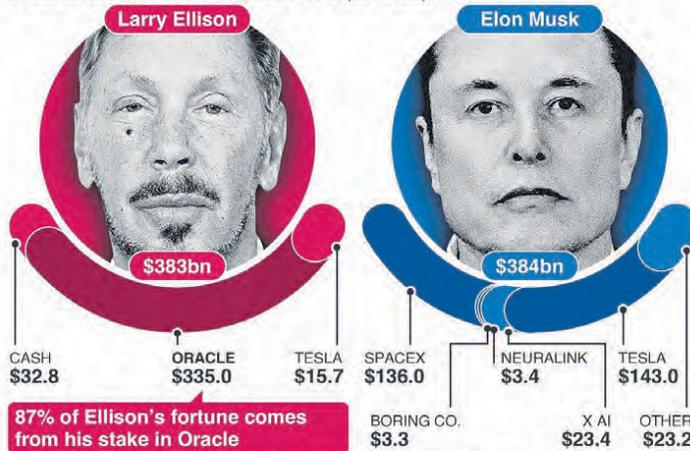
She told a regular briefing that a downward revision in U.S. employment data announced on Tuesday was a "bit larger" than the historical average. The U.S. government said 911,000 fewer jobs were likely created in the 12 months through March than previously estimated, suggesting that job growth was stalling before President Donald Trump's aggressive tariffs on imports.

Such revisions could be driven by a variety of factors, including statistical issues and some related to response and survey errors, she said, adding the issue would be discussed during the scheduled IMF review of the U.S. economy in November. The Labor Department's inspector general on Wednesday said it was initiating a review of challenges that the Bureau of Labor Statistics faces in collecting and reporting U.S. economic data after it made large downward revisions to nonfarm payrolls and cut its inflation data collection.

### Tight race for world's richest person

Oracle co-founder, Larry Ellison, briefly became the world's richest person knocking Elon Musk off the top spot, after shares in his tech giant skyrocketed

WHERE THEIR FORTUNES RESIDE (\$billions)



87% of Ellison's fortune comes from his stake in Oracle

TWO BIGGEST PLAYERS IN BILLIONAIRES INDEX (\$billions)



Oracle share price soared more than 40% on announcing positive outlook for cloud infrastructure business and artificial intelligence dealings, propelled by growing demand for data centre infrastructure

Sources: BBC, CNN, Bloomberg

Pictures: Getty Images

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### Oracle takes a breather after record run to \$1 trillion club

NEW YORK--Oracle shares retreated on Thursday after a record AI-driven surge in the previous session that put the company closer to the trillion-dollar mark and co-founder Larry Ellison within striking distance of the world's richest person title.

The enterprise software maker's remarkable rise, fueled by a wave of multi-billion-dollar cloud deals, puts the spotlight on the scramble for computing power from companies that are pouring billions to become leaders in the AI race.

Oracle's shares fell about 4% after climbing as much as 35.9% on Wednesday. The company's market valuation rose to a record \$933 billion, as of last close, but is set to fall to around \$894 billion if losses hold.

Ellison's net worth stood at around \$371.7 billion, largely driven by his 41% stake in Oracle, compared with Tesla CEO Elon Musk's \$441.2 billion fortune that tops Forbes' global wealth rankings.

"A bit of buyer exhaus-

tion here. I think the "buy the dip" crowd is likely to re-emerge," said Dennis Dick, chief strategist at Stock Trader Network. "The guidance was so incredible, hard to think that this story is over."

Oracle said on Tuesday its order backlog is on track to hit half a trillion dollars in the coming months. The Wall Street Journal also reported on Wednesday that OpenAI has signed a \$300 billion deal with Oracle for computing power, among the biggest in history.

Oracle's stock has nearly doubled in value this year, making it among the top performers in the S&P 500 index, trouncing gains made by the so-called Magnificent Seven stocks. The median price target of \$342 represents an upside of around 9% to the company's stock price of \$314.45, according to LSEG data.

The shares were trading at a premium compared to its cloud services peers. Their 12-month forward price-to-earnings multiple was 45.3, compared with Amazon's 31.3 and Microsoft's 31.

## Novo Nordisk tells staff to return to office full-time

COPENHAGEN--Wegov-maker Novo Nordisk said on Thursday it had told all its staff to return to the office as the drugmaker's new CEO tries to accelerate decision-making and improve its commercial execution amid intense competition in the obesity drug market.

Novo on Wednesday said it would cut 9,000 jobs after sales growth had stalled and shares had slumped, knocking \$450 billion off the company's market cap since the middle of last year, as it faces competition from U.S. rival Eli Lilly and a wave of compounded copycat drugs. "This is designed to foster a stronger sense of belonging, strengthen relationships, enhance collaboration and accelerate decision-making processes," the company said in a statement.

The company declined to comment on what its previous work-from-home policy



A view shows a Novo Nordisk sign outside their office in Bagsvaerd, on the outskirts of Copenhagen, Denmark, July 14, 2025.

was. According to Danish news agency Ritzau, there were no general guidelines on working from home prior to Thursday, and rules varied from one country

and department to another. The chair of Danish trade union HK Privat, which organises administrative staff and laboratory technicians at Novo Nordisk,

said he was surprised that Novo had discontinued its work-from-home policy. "Working from home and a vibrant office culture are not necessarily mutu-

ally exclusive," Kim Jung Olsen said in a statement. "It is unfortunate for the many employees who have enjoyed being able to work from home from time to time that management has not managed to make this work at Novo Nordisk."

Novo's request comes after other companies have abandoned work-from-home policies. In January, JPMorgan Chase asked employees to return to the office five days a week starting in March, while U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered federal workers back to the office. Amazon and others already asked staff to return to the office late last year.

Novo said it would still be possible for employees to make individual agreements with their managers, leaving some room for flexibility to ensure that both personal and business needs were met.

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## Russian drones in Poland's airspace stir worries for Europe's civil aviation

SEOUL/FRANKFURT-The incursion of Russian drones in Poland has reignited safety concerns over the vulnerability of civil air transport in Europe, aviation and insurance experts said, the latest upheaval facing airlines from escalating global conflict.

Early on Wednesday, Poland shot down drones in its airspace with the backing of military aircraft from its NATO allies, the first time a member of the Western military alliance is known to have fired shots during Russia's war in Ukraine. Warsaw Chopin and Modlin airports, as well as Rzeszow and Lublin airports in the country's east, temporarily closed before resuming operations.

Countries bordering on Ukraine have reported occasional Russian missiles or drones entering their airspace since Russia's 2022 invasion, but not on such a large scale, and they are not known to have shot them down.

Proliferating conflict zones around the world have increased the burden on airline operations and profitability, adding to safety concerns and disrupting travel. With airspace closures around Russia and Ukraine, throughout the Middle East, between India and Pakistan, and in parts of Africa, airlines are left with fewer route options.

Detours add to airlines' fuel costs and lengthen journey times. Eurocontrol, a 41-nation coordination agency, has said Ukraine's closed airspace has added to congestion in the region's skies.



Firefighters gather on a destroyed roof to inspect a damaged house, after Russian drones violated Polish airspace during an attack on Ukraine, with some being shot down by Poland with backing from NATO allies, in Wyrki-Wola, Lublin Voivodeship, Poland, September 10, 2025.

Since October 2023, many international carriers have suspended flights to the region due to fears of missile and drone interference. Wednesday's drone incident followed Israel's attempt on Tuesday to kill the political leaders of Hamas in the Qatari capital Doha.

Worries about further disruption for the travel industry pressured airline stocks. Shares in British Airways owner IAG were down 4.1%, easyJet fell 2.2% to its weakest since April, while Lufthansa and Ryanair were both also 2.2% lower at the close of trade.

Flight disruptions were relatively limited because the drone incursion happened early in the morning, before many airlines had

started flying. Polish airline LOT redirected some flights to western Poland and said it expected cancellations and delays.

A spokesperson for budget airline Wizz Air, which operates in central and eastern Europe, said its security teams "closely monitored" the situation and adjusted flight schedules after airports closed. The European Union Aviation Safety Agency said no advisory was needed for the drone incursion due to its temporary nature, adding that Poland's aviation authorities were able to sufficiently handle the incident.

Aviation analysts say airlines are increasingly wary of the risks posed by incursions into civilian flight zones. "This is a wake-up call, I think, for

everyone in Europe that can expect this more often," said Eric Schouten, head of security consultancy Dyami.

Two senior aviation insurance market sources said the market was watching events in Poland and Qatar closely. If the market got a sense either that Russian drone incursions into Polish airspace were becoming consistent and deliberate, or that Israeli airstrikes in the Middle East were likely to continue, it would pose serious questions for insurers, one source added.

LOT, Lufthansa, Ryanair, and airBaltic did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Poland's civil aviation authority and air navigation service did not respond to a request for comment on

additional measures taken to ensure airspace safety.

Following the drone incident, airlines may review their risk assessments in Poland, said Matthew Borie, chief intelligence officer at aviation risk consultancy Osprey Flight Solutions.

They may consider flying further west in Poland away from the Russian, Ukrainian, and Belarusian borders, operating during daylight hours and carrying extra fuel to cope with potential diversions, he said, similar to steps taken in the Middle East.

The worst-case scenario for airlines flying near a conflict zone is a plane being struck — either accidentally or deliberately — by weaponry. Since 2001, six commercial planes have been unintentionally shot down, with three additional close calls, according to Osprey.

In one such incident, in December, an Azerbaijan Airlines flight crashed in Kazakhstan, killing 38 people. The plane was accidentally shot down by Russian air defences, according to Azerbaijan's president and Reuters sources.

In 2020, a Ukrainian passenger plane was mistakenly targeted and destroyed by Iranian air defence operators.

"If this happens more often, you really have to understand what's happening ... What might go wrong? I'm always saying, misidentification is your biggest risk," Schouten added.

## ECB holds rates unchanged, Europe still 'in a good place'

FRANKFURT-The European Central Bank left interest rates unchanged on Thursday as expected and maintained an upbeat view on growth and inflation, dampening expectations for any further cut in borrowing costs.

The ECB halved its key rate in the year to June but has been on hold at 2% since, arguing that the economy of the 20-country euro zone is in a "good place" even if all policy options, including additional easing, could not be ruled out. Recent data has confirmed this sanguine view, giving policymakers time to understand how U.S. tariffs, higher German government spending, looming Federal Reserve rate cuts and political turmoil

in France might impact growth and inflation.

"We continue to be in a good place," ECB President Christine Lagarde told a press conference, adding that inflation was where the ECB wanted it to be and the domestic economy solid.

Uncertainty about global trade had eased after a number of U.S. tariff deals, she said, including the European Union's own agreement which set a 15% duty on most U.S. imports of EU goods.

Sources with direct knowledge of the discussion said rate cut talk was not over but that it would still take months for the ECB to gain clarity, meaning the next proper debate on whether more support is needed is



European Central Bank (ECB) President Christine Lagarde addresses the media after the ECB's Governing Council meeting, at the ECB headquarters in Frankfurt, Germany, on Thursday.

likely to be in December. While the ECB still sees inflation dipping below its 2% target next year, investors curbed rate-cut bets after Lagarde said risks were more balanced.

"Two things have clearly

moved out of our radar screen when it comes to downside risk," Lagarde said. "The first one is the risk of European retaliation, the second thing ... is that trade uncertainty has clearly diminished."

Money markets are now pricing in just a 40% chance of one last rate cut by next spring, less than before Thursday's decision, even while they expect the Fed to ease U.S. borrowing costs six times by the end of 2026.



# Haiti cannot wait - all OAS member states declare: "The time for decisive action is now"

By Sir Ronald Sanders

On 10 September, all 32 active member states of the Organization of American States (OAS) signed a joint statement on Haiti. As often happens in diplomacy, not every member state participated in the discussions and negotiations that produced the text. Antigua and Barbuda did. I led our delegation. We argued line by line because, in diplomacy, words decide budgets, mandates, and lives – they must be carefully weighed.

My delegation had four concerns.

First, the UN Security Council resolution proposed by the United States and Panama – to which the joint statement refers – has not yet been adopted. Discussions have been constant in New York, but the text is still not agreed. In plain terms, the United States and Panama are asking the UN Security Council to replace the small, under-resourced Kenya-led mission in Haiti with a larger, UN-backed force – about 5,550 personnel – with the legal authority to detain gang members, secure critical infrastructure (airports, ports, hospitals, schools), and run intelligence-led

operations against armed groups for 12 months. The plan also stands up a UN Support Office to handle logistics and reimburse equipment costs, while voluntary contributions to a UN Trust Fund cover personnel reimbursements and other mission needs, keeping costs transparent and shared. This is understandable. The Kenyan-led mission has struggled to deliver sufficient results relative to the costs borne by funders. It cannot continue in this fashion.

Second, replacing the Multinational Security Support mission with any "Gang Suppression Force" risks narrowing the lens to the use of force – what my Deputy Head of Mission, Joy-Dee Davis-Lake, aptly called "urban warfare" – while missing the wider context of Haiti's economic and social conditions that helped create the gangs. As I said publicly in response to a *Miami Herald* question, any new UN action cannot be only about suppression. Gangs recruit boys who have nothing to eat and no opportunities to grow into self-sufficient adults; violence grows where institutions are hollow, wages are non-existent, and there is no reason to trust the system in which people live.

Yes, security is essential, but it must not be regarded as sufficient.

Third, Haitian ownership must not be a slogan; it is the basis of legitimacy for any transformation in the country. Antigua and Barbuda wanted the Haitian authorities to take clear ownership of the joint statement, and to accept accountability for actions in Haiti, including how funds are used. Without that, international support will remain hesitant and unsure.

Fourth, we wanted to ensure that nothing in the joint statement opened a door for the OAS, as an institution, to participate in the use of force. The OAS Charter provides no such authority. More importantly, the OAS' value – its credibility as a peace-builder and honest broker – would be undermined if it drifts into kinetic (use-of-force) operations. The OAS role is institution-building, rights, and political accompaniment. It is in the interest of each member state, and of the Organization's relevance, that it keeps to its role.

Those were our guardrails. Within them, we supported the Joint Statement for the following reasons. The statement reaffirms

that Haiti must lead and places the United Nations at the centre of security operations, including a support office (UNSOH) and the transition to a stronger force aimed at restoring a safe, stable environment and dismantling gangs. That is the right hierarchy: the UN leads on protection; Haiti leads on sovereignty and responsibility.

The OAS is given a clear role – strengthening institutional and operational capacities through a civil, humanitarian, and human-rights approach. That keeps the Organization where it is most effective: helping the Haitian National Police with non-force enablement and helping the state rebuild the basics of governance.

The text encourages voluntary contributions to the UN Trust Fund for the new force and welcomes complementary support through OAS mechanisms such as SECURE-Haiti for police enablement, consistent with the UN framework. That pairing keeps money flows honest, channels visible, and burdens shared according to capability.

By calling for coordination among the UN, OAS, CARICOM, and Haiti, the statement tries to stop the

waste the world has seen when work overlaps with no coordination.

The statement explicitly joins security operations with attention to root causes: weak institutions, corruption, poverty, stark inequalities, and the collapse of education and basic services. That is the difference between beating off gangs for a few months and building lasting peace for the future.

Thankfully, even as final negotiations were concluding on the joint statement, the UN undertook to move \$9 million in emergency funds to Haiti, in part to maintain the La Paix Hospital which is the only public hospital still functioning in Port-au-Prince. As Tom Fletcher, the UN's under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs, put it: the security track only works alongside a humanitarian track that helps people go home, rebuild livelihoods, and recover dignity. That is precisely the balance we fought to preserve in the OAS text.

So where does this leave us?

It leaves the UN with the responsibility to deliver protection from gang predation and lawlessness – lawfully, accountably, and with the consent of Haiti's

authorities. It leaves the OAS to backstop that effort where its Charter and competence are strongest: institution-building, rights compliance, political accompaniment, and non-force support to the Haitian National Police. It leaves donors with a clear request: fund the Trust Fund so the new force can function, and fund humanitarian operations so society can live a normal life.

And it leaves the UN Security Council, especially the five permanent members, with a simple message: the states closest to Haiti – its neighbours in the OAS – have spoken with unusual unity after serious and attentive discussions by several lead countries. We support a Haitian-led path, a UN-led protection mandate, and a comprehensive strategy that treats both the symptoms and the cause of the Haitian crisis. As we conclude in the statement: "Haiti cannot wait. The time for decisive, coordinated action is now."

(The author is the Ambassador of Antigua and Barbuda to the United States and the OAS, and Dean of the OAS Ambassadors accredited to the OAS. Responses and previous commentaries: [www.sironaldsanders.com](http://www.sironaldsanders.com))

# Trump could learn a critical lesson from Argentina's President Javier Milei

By Andres Oppenheimer

Argentine President Javier Milei is one of President Trump's most fervent disciples, but his political idol should learn a lesson from Milei. After his party suffered a crushing defeat in Sunday's local elections, Milei did something very un-Trumpian: He publicly admitted his loss.

It was a surprising admission, mainly because Milei has mimicked Trump's playbook at every turn. He

casts himself as a radical anti-establishment outsider battling a "corrupt political caste," constantly berates independent and "woke" institutions and has even adopted "let's make Argentina great again" as one of his main slogans.

But on Sunday, after losing crucial local elections in Buenos Aires, Argentina's largest and most populous province, Milei told the nation that "without any doubt, we have suffered a clear political

defeat." Those few words disarmed a multitude of critics at home and abroad who have long accused him of being an authoritarian leader.

Granted, that's probably little consolation for the president right now. His loss sent a jolt of panic through business circles, causing Argentine stocks to plummet by more than 20% on Wall Street Monday. Investors now worry that Milei's defeat is a bad omen for the crucial legislative elections in October, a contest that could potentially derail his free-market economic reforms.

Even more frightening for them is the prospect of a full-blown comeback by the Peronist party, with its long history of corruption and economic mismanagement, in the 2027 presidential election. In Sunday's vote, the Peronists trounced Milei's right-libertarian party by a staggering 47% to 34%, a far cry from the

nail-biter that many pollsters had predicted.

Although Buenos Aires has long been a Peronist bastion, Milei's recent successes in taming Argentina's chronic inflation had fueled speculation that he could pull off a stunning upset. Milei even boasted that the election would be "the last nail in the coffin of Kirchnerism," referring to the movement led by former President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who is currently serving a corruption sentence at home.

But Milei's "chainsaw" approach to budget cuts cost him dearly. His sister Karina, his powerful top aide, was also hit by a last-minute corruption scandal just days before the election, which undoubtedly hurt the campaign. Not even X owner Elon Musk, one of Milei's biggest cheerleaders, could tweet him to victory.

"This was a disaster for Milei," says Carlos Reymundo Roberts, a colum-

nist for Argentina's daily *La Nación* and co-author of a recent book on the politics in Buenos Aires province. "He could, in theory, still recover in time for the October midterms, but it's going to be difficult."

He and other analysts point to one colossal blunder: Milei's refusal to form a genuine power-sharing coalition with former President Mauricio Macri's center-right PRO party. While Milei's party partnered with some local PRO candidates, he largely relegated Macri's party to a secondary role.

The result? The PRO's support for Milei's ticket was, at best, lukewarm. "Milei's arrogance cost him dearly in this election," Reymundo Roberts told me. "He thought he could win by himself, without actively enlisting like-minded parties."

Indeed, judging from the three times I've interviewed Milei and other conversa-

tions I had with him, he despises politicians. That trait helped him win the presidency, but now that he needs a congressional majority to pass his reforms, it might be working against him. However, Milei should get credit for his quick, no-excuses concession speech on Sunday. It was a remarkable display of political maturity, something neither Trump nor his Peronist rivals have been able to muster. Instead, both have a history of falsely claiming "rigged elections" without a shred of evidence whenever they lose.

If Milei can tone down his words and start building bridges with center-right politicians, he could still recover politically and go down in history as the leader who defeated Argentina's historic inflation curse. But if he insists on going it alone, his political future is likely to be a lot shorter than he imagined.



Proverbs 31:25-26, 28  
*"Strength and honour are her clothing;  
 and she shall rejoice in time to come.  
 She openeth her mouth with wisdom;  
 and in her tongue is the law of kindness.  
 Her children arise up, and call her blessed;*



**Celebrating the life of  
 Marie T. Lake-Hyman**  
 May 8th, 1936 - September 3rd, 2025

A wake will be held on Wednesday, September 10th, 2025 from 7 p.m. - 10 p.m. at the Senior Citizens' Recreational Center in Hope Estate.

The celebration of life service will be held on Friday, September 12th, 2025 at Praise Tabernacle Church in Cole Bay. Viewing & Tributes from at 10 a.m. and service at 11 a.m. Interment will follow at Cul de Sac Cemetery.

The family appreciates your support and kindly asks that there be no visitors following the service.  
 May her soul rest in eternal peace!

All services entrusted to Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium.

*It is with deep sadness in our hearts that we hereby  
 announce the passing of:*



**Edner Pinthievre**  
 Sunrise: October 27th, 1965  
 Sunset: September 8th, 2025

The funeral arrangements for the late:  
**Edner Pinthievre**  
 will be announced in a subsequent announcement.

The Management & Staff of Emerald Funeral Home & Crematory would like to extend their deepest sympathy to the family, friends & loved ones of the late: Edner Pinthievre.

*May His Soul Rest In Peace.*

*"Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would  
 fulfill his promises to her!" You are blessed because you  
 believed that the Lord would do what he said."*

It is with great sadness that we hereby announce the  
 passing of a mother, grandmother,  
 great-grand mother, great great-grandmother,  
 aunt, great aunt and friend:



**Elin Peters  
 Hodge Gumbs**  
 Affectionately known as  
 "Nana" "Tantie"  
 Sunrise: August 5th, 1931  
 Sunset: September 4th, 2025

**Left to mourn are her:**  
**Son:** Alfred Ashton Gumbs and  
 Judella Gumbs-Illidge

**Adopted son:** Junior Earlington Duzung  
 and Family

**Adopted son:** Bart van den Bos and Family

**Adopted daughter:** Sandra Marryshaw and Family

**Grandchildren:** Sandra Gumbs and Family, Diana Nisbeth- Cocks and Family, Jerome Gumbs and Family, Bernadette Gumbs and Family, Ricardo Gumbs and Family, Aron Blijden and Family, Bernice Gumbs, Giselle Gumbs and Family, Wendy Gumbs and Family, Rignald Gumbs, Justin Randy Gumbs and Judelka Gumbs

**Great-grandchildren: Too numerous to mention**

**Great great-grandchildren:** Nylah, Niem, Xolani, Mayle, Chonsley and Elisheva.

**Niece:** Anita Petty, The Valley, Anguilla

**Great nieces and nephew:** Veronica Connor and Family (Anguilla), Jennifer Lake and Family (St. Thomas), Rawly Lake and Family (Anguilla), Sandra Marryshaw and Family (Anguilla)

**Great-great nieces and nephews: too numerous to mention.**

**Close friends:** Annette Lake and Family, Marie Fancisco and Family, Audrey Lake and Family, Norma Hughes (AXA), Nadia Gumbes and Family, Julian Gumbes and Family, George Gumbes and Family, Lolita Illidge and Family, Priscilla Woodley and Family, Daphne Martin Caines and Family, Maureen Thomas and Family, Alvin "Big Al" Constance and Family, The Boys by the Shop on Lime Road.

**Caretaker:** Beverly Ball

**Former neighbors:** Maggie Casamajor, Micah Casamajor and Family

**She was related to the following families:** Gumbs, Peters, Hodge, Petty, Illidge, Gumbes, Woodley, Lake, Marryshaw, Connor, Richardson, Arrindell, Carty, Hughes, Nisbeth, Cocks, Arrendell and Blijden.

A wake will be held on: **Saturday September 13th, 2025**  
 At the: **Rupert Maynard Community Center, St. Peters**  
 From: 7:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.

The funeral service will be held on:  
**Monday, September 15th, 2025**  
 At the: **SS Simon Jude Anglican Church, Philipsburg**  
 Viewing & tributes: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
 Service: 11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
 Interment: Cul de Sac Cemetery

Transportation to the funeral service will be provided from the Rupert Maynard Community Center. Persons are asked to be at the Community Center at 8:30 a.m. Transportation will depart to the funeral service at 9:00 a.m.

The family wishes to thank the staff of The White & Yellow Cross Care Foundation. The family also wishes to extend their sincere apologies, if by any means, we forgot anyone who was dear to her. We do hope everyone understands during this time of bereavement.

The Management & Staff of Emerald Funeral Home & Crematory would like to extend their deepest sympathy to the family, friends & loved ones of the late: Elin Peter Hodge Gumbs.

May her soul rest in Peace.

*I have fought the good fight, I have finished  
 the race, I have kept the faith. 2 Timothy 4:7*

It is with deep sadness that we hereby announce  
 the passing of beloved mother, grandmother, great  
 grandmother & aunt:



**Mrs. Carmen Caines Salomon**  
 Sunrise: June 13th, 1934 ~ Sunset: September 2nd, 2025

The wake will be held on **Tuesday, September 16th, 2025**  
 from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. at **The Bute Hotel**  
 (next to NAPA, Philipsburg).

The homegoing service will take place on **Thursday, September 18th, 2025** at the **Philipsburg Methodist Church**. Viewing & tributes from 10:00 a.m. - 10:50 a.m., service starts at 11:00 a.m. Interment at the **Methodist Cemetery, Philipsburg**.

All services entrusted to  
 Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium.

*The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.  
 He makes me to lie down in green pastures.  
 He leads me beside the still waters. Psalm 23:1-2*

We are deeply saddened to hereby  
 announce the death of:



**Denise Veronica  
 Williams Jones**  
 Sunrise: July 28th, 1963  
 Sunset: September 4th, 2025

We are thankful for every moment shared with her.

A wake will be held **Monday, September 15th, 2025** from  
 6:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m. at the **Dutch Quarter  
 Community Center, Dutch Quarter**.

The funeral service will be on  
**Wednesday, September 17th, 2025** at **Royal Funeral  
 Home & Crematorium, Sucker Garden**.  
 Viewing will be from 9:30 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.,  
 service begins at 10:30 a.m.  
 followed by interment at the **Cul de Sac Cemetery**.

All services entrusted to  
 Royal Funeral Home & Crematorium.

**The Best Way  
 to notify the  
 St. Maarten public.  
 Call our advertising  
 department  
 on 5425253.**



# Apple draws Hollywood talent, Emmy recognition with creative risks

LOS ANGELES--Nearly six years after technology giant Apple made its Hollywood debut with the launch of Apple TV+, the iPhone maker is positioned for primetime glory at Sunday's Emmy Awards.

Apple's streaming service earned 81 Emmy nominations for 14 titles this year, the company's strongest showing to date at the annual celebration of television excellence. Its science-fiction series "Severance" and Hollywood satire "The Studio" are frontrunners for best drama and best comedy, awards experts say.

The company known for its carefully cultivated image has taken chances on unconventional stories, trusted script writers and provided creative freedom, according to producers, writers and actors who have worked with Apple TV+. Its approach has helped Apple attract A-list talent and elevated its reputation in Hollywood.

## How Apple TV+ Lures Top Talent

Actor Seth Rogen said one reason he brought "The Studio" to Apple TV+ was because of the latitude provided on another comedy of his, "Platonic".

"I was really worried that maybe they'd be restrictive," Rogen said. "And then there's a scene in 'Platonic' where we snort cocaine and ketamine off of an iPhone."

"We were allowed to do this!" Rogen said. "They were not as corporate overlord-y as maybe I was worried they were going to be."

Apple TV+ launched in 2019 with a handful of original series including "The Morning Show," Jennifer Aniston's first TV foray since "Friends". At the time, industry insiders criticized the company's strategy of providing limited offerings without a collection of previously released shows.

Studio executives Jamie Erlicht and Zack Van Amburg stayed the course, building Apple TV+'s library of programming, one bespoke series at a time. The company achieved a milestone in 2021, when "Ted Lasso" became the first streaming series to win the best comedy Emmy.

Apple has increased spending on original pro-



Cast members Jason Segel and Harrison Ford attend a premiere for Season 2 of the television series "Shrinking", at Pacific Design Center in West Hollywood, California, U.S., October 8, 2024.

gramming to \$4.9 billion this year, from \$660 million in 2019, according to Ampere Analysis. That investment has helped Apple TV+ reach about 60 million subscribers, according to Gene Munster, managing partner at Deepwater Asset Management, who believes the service is likely breaking even. Apple TV+ does not disclose subscriber numbers or financial details.

Netflix, by contrast, spends

roughly \$17 billion and has more than 300 million subscribers.

## Winning Content

Now, Apple TV+ is considered a top Hollywood destination, said Endeavor talent agency co-founder Rick Rosen. "They've shown a lot of patience, and they've really built a very high-quality slate that's gotten people's attention," Rosen said.

Ben Stiller, an executive

producer and director of "Severance," said no other studio wanted to make the mind-bending show about characters who undergo surgery to separate their work and personal memories. Erlicht and Van Amburg, and programming head Matt Cherniss, "got the concept completely," Stiller said.

"Severance" leads all series with 27 Emmy nominations. "As a startup, they had a lot on the line," Still-

er said. "I found them to be very deferential to creatives, but also with smart thoughts."

Jason Segel, star of best comedy nominee "Shrinking," credited Apple executives with seeing the promise in a story about a therapist who tries to help others while often making bad choices for himself, such as taking drugs and entertaining sex workers while his daughter is upstairs. "This is pretty dangerous territory for a feel-good comedy," Segel said. "But right from the beginning there was trust, like these guys can pull this off."

Oscar-winner Jessica Chastain said Apple TV+'s domestic programming director, Michelle Lee, reached out as the actress and her producing partner were pitching the upcoming thriller "The Savant," about an undercover investigator who infiltrates online hate groups. Working with Apple was so positive, Chastain said, that she has two more projects with the streamer.

"All of the notes that were coming our way were really specific and moved the story forward," she said.

## Follow Movie Success

"Breaking Bad" creator Vince Gilligan said he took

his coming sci-fi series, "Pluribus," to Apple TV+ in part because they made "a very generous offer" among multiple bidders.

Gilligan said other factors counted more than the dollar figure, which he declined to disclose. A major plus, he said, was the opportunity to reunite with Erlicht and Van Amburg, who led Sony Pictures Television when it produced "Breaking Bad" and spin-off "Better Call Saul". He lauded Apple for supporting an ambitious show.

Recent TV achievements follow success for Apple's original movies, which play in theaters before heading to Apple TV+. "Coda" won the best picture Oscar in 2022, and Brad Pitt racing drama "F1: The Movie" was a summer box-office hit.

Apple "understood that the movie had to be made in the right way," said "F1" producer Jerry Bruckheimer, noting that meant filming during actual Formula 1 races and building a race car.

"They realized that the value of doing it in a very accurate way would be the best way to present this movie as something from Apple," Bruckheimer said. "It's really well designed and beautifully done."



Cast members Masaki Okada and Mana Ashida pose during a photocall for the anime movie "Scarlet" out of competition, at the 82nd Venice International Film Festival in Venice, Italy, September 4, 2025.

# Japanese director Hosoda explores forgiveness in animated tale Scarlet

TORONTO--Oscar-nominated Japanese director Mamoru Hosoda delivers a powerful message of forgiveness in his new animated film "Scarlet," a Hamlet-inspired tale of vengeance fit for a world grappling with conflicts and instability.

"Scarlet" screened at the Toronto International Film Festival on Wednesday, following its world premiere earlier this month in Venice.

The film revolves around Princess Scarlet's quest to avenge her father after he is killed by her uncle in a world where life and death coexist. As her journey unfolds, Scarlet faces questions about breaking free from the vicious cycle of hatred and finding life's

true purpose.

"I wondered how Hamlet would struggle, if the ghost asked him to forgive instead (of seeking revenge). That's where the story found its direction," Hosoda said through an interpreter during a Q&A following the North American premiere in Toronto. "I can't help but think about how humanity can break the cycle of revenge."

In the film, some scenes are strikingly realistic and expansive, sometimes almost eerily so, thanks to Hosoda's skill in blending traditional hand-drawn animation with computer graphics. Still, he said finding the perfect visual expression to suit the story was challenging. "I

kept searching for the best approach throughout production, but I still don't know what the correct answer is," he said.

Hosoda is best known internationally for his fantasy adventure anime "Mirai," which was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature in 2019. It was the first time a Japanese animation not produced by Studio Ghibli had received such recognition. Ghibli, co-founded by Hayao Miyazaki, has twice won the Oscar for "Spirited Away" and "The Boy and the Heron" in 2003 and 2024, respectively.

"Scarlet" will first release in Japan on November 21, before landing in North America on December 12.

# The Man in My Basement thriller asks who writes history

TORONTO--When the psychological thriller "The Man in My Basement," starring Willem Dafoe and Corey Hawkins, hits theatres on Friday, director Nadia Latif hopes the audience will leave questioning who has written history. "I want people to be thinking about who tells their stories ... and actually to do their own kind of investigation into what they believe their place in the world to be," Latif told Reuters following the film's world premiere at the Toronto International Film Festival. The movie, which is La-

tif's feature directorial debut and an adaptation of a Walter Mosley novel of the same name, follows the story of a young Black man whose life is on the brink of crumbling. He is about to lose his family's home when a stranger knocks on his door with a bizarre request — to rent his basement for a hefty sum.

Dafoe, who plays the mysterious tenant, said it did not take much thinking after he read the script to know he wanted to be a part of the film. "I liked the story and I

liked how it's able to discuss certain things that are in the air of concern to me," he told Reuters. "Once (Latif and I) started talking, I realized I was deficient in some of my knowledge of some of the things that are talked about in the film, and I needed to be educated ... and she was great at that."

Throughout the film, Dafoe and Hawkins' characters face off in a series of tense monologues, all set in the dingy basement, that confront themes of race, privilege, and history.

"I hope that people do of big, ugly things that are feel unsettled by it. I think discussed within the film," there's some really kind Latif said.

**BVN (Dutch/Flemish) TV**  
TelTV Channel 014  
WTN Channel 204

**Friday, September 12**

- 12:00pm NOS Journaal
- 12:20pm Nederland in Beweging
- 12:35pm MAX Geheugentrainer
- 12:50pm Goedemorgen Nederland
- 1:05pm NOS Journaal
- 1:20pm Goedemorgen Nederland
- 1:35pm Kook mee met MAX
- 1:50pm Noord-Zuid-Oost-West
- 2:20pm NOS Journaal
- 2:35pm Dit jaar gaat 't lukken!
- 3:10pm Sesamstraat
- 3:30pm Brugklas
- 3:30pm Het Klokhuis
- 3:55pm NOS Jeugdjournaal
- 4:15pm NOS Journaal in Makkelijke Taal
- 4:25pm Tijd voor MAX
- 5:05pm NOS Journaal
- 5:20pm BinnensteBuiten
- 5:50pm EenVandaag
- 6:20pm Carrie op Vrijdag
- 7:05pm NOS Journaal
- 7:30pm Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
- 7:35pm Flikken Rotterdam
- 8:25pm Stand van Nederland: Koplopers
- 8:35pm De slimste mens
- 9:20pm Nieuwsuur
- 10:00pm Weerbericht Amerika/Caraïben
- 10:05pm Café Kockelmann
- 10:55pm NOS Journaal
- 11:15pm Zembla

**Saturday, September 13**

- 12:00pm NOS Journaal
- 12:10pm First Dates
- 1:00pm Kassa
- 1:45pm Het beste van...de zero's
- 2:30pm Krabbé zoekt Matisse
- 3:15pm Sesamstraat 10 voor...
- 3:25pm Alles Flex
- 3:40pm Het Klokhuis
- 3:55pm Zapp Kids Top 20
- 4:25pm NOS Jeugdjournaal
- 4:45pm Dit is de kwestie
- 5:10pm NOS Journaal
- 5:25pm Expeditie Nederland
- 5:55pm EenVandaag
- 6:20pm Vroege Vogels
- 7:05pm NOS Journaal
- 7:25pm Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
- 7:30pm Beste Zangers
- 8:30pm Ik Vertrek
- 9:15pm Nieuwsuur
- 9:45pm Weerbericht Amerika/Caraïben
- 9:50pm NOS Studio Sport Voetbal
- 10:40pm Schiffmacher's Legacy
- 11:10pm NOS Journaal
- 11:15pm NOS Journaal Regio
- 11:20pm Sterren NL Top 25

**Sunday, September 14**

- 12:00pm NOS Journaal
- 12:10pm WNL Op Zondag
- 1:05pm Buitenhof
- 2:00pm Brugklas marathon
- 2:50pm Zin in Zappelin
- 3:10pm Zappsport The Battle
- 3:25pm Klaas kan alles
- 3:50pm NOS Jeugdjournaal
- 4:10pm Checkpoint
- 4:35pm Nederland zingt op zondag
- 5:05pm NOS Journaal
- 5:10pm NPO Doc: Wie de Kudde verlaat
- 6:05pm NOS Studio Sport Voetbal
- 7:00pm NOS Journaal
- 7:15pm Weerbericht Europa/Afrika
- 7:20pm Het MAX Orkest
- 8:20pm De Goudvis
- 9:10pm Nieuwsuur
- 9:40pm Weerbericht Amerika/Caraïben
- 9:45pm NOS Studio Voetbal
- 10:35pm Andere Tijden
- 11:00pm Iedereen Verlicht
- 11:25pm 2 voor 12

**TV15 (local)**  
TelTV Channel 001

**Friday, September 12**

- 6:00am International Sports Highlights
- 6:30am Caribbean News World
- 7:00am Fashion News
- 8:00am International News and Sports
- 9:00am Documentary
- 10:00am Dcomm Special PCM
- 10:30am SXM Sports
- 11:00am Morning Series
- 12:00pm International Sports Highlights
- 1:00pm Romance Movies
- 3:00pm Late Night with Andrew Dick
- 4:00pm Special Events
- 5:30pm Caribbean News World
- 6:00pm International Sports
- 6:30pm Weekly News Review
- 7:00pm French News – Our News
- 7:30pm Local Kids Program
- 8:00pm Insider Government
- 8:30pm SXM Sports
- 9:00pm Evening Series
- 10:00pm Late Night with Andrew Dick
- 11:00pm Spanish SXM
- 11:30pm Theater Movies

**Saturday, September 13**

- 6:30am Caribbean News World
- 7:00am Little House on the Prairie
- 8:00am Sat. Children Hours & Movies
- 1:00pm Wrestling
- 2:00pm Moment of the Month
- 2:30pm Local Sports
- 6:00pm Special
- 7:00pm Evening Series
- 8:00pm Theater Movies

**Sunday, September 14**

- 6:00am Religious Music Videos
- 8:30am Good News Baptist
- 11:00am Praise Tabernacle Church
- 12:00pm Pacific Garden Mission
- 1:00pm Methodist Church
- 1:30pm Joel Osteen
- 2:00pm Religious Documentary
- 3:00pm Religious Movies
- 4:00pm Classical Concert
- 6:00pm Documentaries
- 8:00pm Special
- 8:30pm PBS Special Report
- 9:00pm Weekly News Review
- 9:30pm French News – Our News
- 10:00pm Theater Movies



Willem Dafoe gestures on the red carpet for the screening of the movie "Bugonia" in competition, at the 82nd Venice Film Festival, in Venice, Italy, August 28, 2025.

**TV-CARIB (local)**  
WTN Channel 010

**Friday, September 12**

- 8:00am Good Morning Beautiful
- 9:00am Morning Show (Pearl FM)
- 12:05pm Viewpoint (PJD/3)
- 5:00pm Animated Kids Program
- 6:30pm Viewpoint Encore
- 7:30pm TV Carib Informer
- 8:00pm Friday Night Retro Movie
- 10:00pm Noticias en Español
- 10:20pm Late Night

**Program Rotation**

**Saturday, September 13**

- 5:00pm Animated Kids Program
- 6:30pm Voice of Our Children
- 7:00pm Biografias y Mas
- 7:30pm Superclip
- 8:00pm All Access
- 8:30pm Retro Movie
- 10:00pm Late Night Movie

**Program Rotation**

**Sunday, September 14**

- 8:00am Happy Family Hour
- 9:00am Encuentro Spiritual
- 9:30am Haitian Church Program
- 10:00am United Israelites
- 12:00pm Thematic Movie
- 2:30pm Voice of Christ

**Program Rotation**

**TeleCuraçao**  
TelTV Channel 035  
WTN Channel 202

**Friday, September 12**

- 6:30am Mòru Bon Dia
- 9:30am Programa Santísima Trinidad
- 10:00am Gostoso ku Ulrich
- 11:00am Djis pa bo sa (r)
- 12:00pm Resumen Informativo AIL
- 12:30pm Extra Journaal
- 1:00pm Tra'i Mèrdia 3.0
- 3:30pm Punto Final (r)
- 4:30pm TCFM Live Magia
- 6:00pm Before & After (r)
- 7:00pm High Lights ku Tito
- 8:00pm Telenotisia
- 9:00pm Wega di Number Kòrsou
- 9:05pm Partisipashon di Morto
- 9:15pm Pagina Sosial
- 9:30pm Interkambio ku Germain
- 10:30pm Chèt Habri (r)
- 11:30pm TeleNotisia (r)

**Saturday, September 13**

- 6:00am Dokumental
- 8:00am Jolly Zone
- 10:00pm Ecosplash – Blue Water
- 11:00am Hermanito: Tumba Historico # 2
- 1:00pm Herensia Sat.
- 2:00pm Oro Puro, Puro Oro
- 3:00pm Djis pa bo sa (r)
- 4:00pm Before & After (r)
- 5:00pm TCFM Live
- 6:00pm Interkambio ku Germaine (r)
- 7:00pm Yu'i Korsou T'ami (r)
- 7:30pm America News 360
- 8:00pm TeleNotisia
- 8:45pm Partisipashon di Morto
- 9:00pm Wega di Number Kòrsou
- 9:05pm Music Videòs
- 9:15pm Bida a Siña'mi
- 10:15pm Konsièrto

**Sunday, September 14**

- 6:00am Dokumental
- 8:00am TCFM Gospel
- 9:00am Santu Sakrifisio di Misa
- 10:30am Herensia
- 11:30pm TCFM Live
- 12:00pm Oro Puro, Puro Oro (r)
- 1:00pm Show Musikal ku Glenn
- 5:00pm Home Team
- 5:30pm Wega di Number Kòrsou
- 5:45pm Sorteo Ekstra
- 6:00pm Before & After
- 7:00pm El Frente (r)
- 7:30pm Ki Bo Kemen?
- 8:00pm TeleNotisia
- 8:45pm Partisipashon di Morto
- 9:00pm Chèt Habri
- 10:15pm 'Ta Konsiente
- 11:15pm Interkambio ku Germaine (r)



# HOROSCOPE

By Magi Helena

**ARIES** (March 21-April 19): Duties and chores are easier to get done with a great attitude and thinking things through before you start. An early jump on the weekend could suit you perfectly and might be doable. Wrap up work with skill and experience before you take off.

**TAURUS** (April 20-May 20): Rely on longer-term intuitive understandings more than a sudden urges where money is concerned but be willing to consider a new possibility. If you are dating, communication could be key. Lean in to confidence and strategy in the workplace.

**GEMINI** (May 21-June 20): Something fresh and new could be on your radar, and it could be a financial improvement or a new twist on your dreams. Even if your career isn't moving well enough or fast enough right now, the Universe is staging next steps.

**CANCER** (June 21-July 22): Your heart could be lingering on a past experience – learn the lesson but release any regret. Course corrections will always be necessary as you navigate toward your best future life. Don't get swept up into a friend's money mess.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug. 22): Use diplomacy instead of heavy boots to get your point across and you won't burn a bridge. Think something through even if you can't move the situation just yet, be ready. An active plan for the weekend could be a great release.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): A sharp mind can conquer many situations; a muddled heart is less able to act cleanly. An emotional trigger could have you temporarily stuck, agitated, and confused – calm your nervous system before you say or do anything.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): The clarity you'd like around money isn't likely to manifest today, there's too much sediment clouding the waters. Improved career growth and a better understanding of how to get there can be your secret weapon now.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): A talk about money with a partner could easily come up but may or may not be productive. If it's going in circles, put a pin in it for later. Press forward in your career with subtlety and delicacy, now is not the time for anything blatant.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): A friend's choice might begin to clarify if it had been previously inexplicable. Always remember that people's behavior based on them and their unhealed stuff, not on you. Powerful inspiration could restore any lost confidence.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Dating could be somehow about money – who will pay, or another concern could arise. Later in the evening the issue should be past. If in a committed relationship, plan a cozy, nurturing weekend together.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Lean in to a weekend of creation and play, get a head start if you can. The vibe could be just right to access a lighter spirit via adventure, art, or music. Let go of concerns and let some freedom and playfulness reboot your soul.

**PISCES** (Feb. 19-March 20): You don't always get to make the impact you'd like, sometimes the Universe has a better plan for you, wait for your highest unfolding. A partner or pal might offer what you need. Even a tiny change could refresh your space.



**Speak your mind**  
By Queenie

**SEND LETTERS TO**  
P.O. BOX 828  
FAX +721 542 5913  
OR E-MAIL  
queenie@thedailyherald.com

**Dear Queenie,**

I go to college in the United States, but my mother treats me as if I am still a child living at home. She calls me every night and if I'm not in by what she thinks should be my bedtime she keeps calling until I get home and then she quizzes me on where I was and who I was with and what we were doing.

She tells me what to eat and what classes to take and what clubs I should or shouldn't join and what sports I should go out for.

Queenie, I know she works hard to pay for my education, but isn't part of that education learning to make my own decisions?—Mama's little boy

**Dear Mama's little boy,**

To a mother, her son is always her little boy, even when he has children of his own. Your mother is obviously having trouble cutting the apron strings and you don't seem to be struggling too hard to grow up.

For instance, if you are old enough to go to college, you are old enough to hold a part-time job to help pay for your education and living expenses. So why does your mother have to work so very hard?

For both your sakes, start learning to stand on your own two feet without Mommy's help and financial support. After all, she won't be there forever to support you and take care of you. Moreover, if you ever intend to get married, you will find that most women won't put up with a dependent little boy for a husband.

Besides, if you are contributing to your own upkeep, you will have a better argument for having some say in the decisions about classes, sports, etc.

**Only notices and events of non-profit or educational organisations will be placed in the Events/Notices column. Notices/Events should be sent to notices@thedailyherald.com in the wording format used on this page. Do not send fliers, photos, locked files or press releases to this address.**

**NOTICES**

**Prosecutor's Opening Time**

Prosecutor's Office is now open in the morning and afternoon Monday to Friday from 8:00am to 12:30pm and 2:00pm to 4:00pm. During those hours, the public may visit the office to get information, pay fine (by debit/credit cards only), and access other services. The Prosecutor's Office is located on Emmaplein behind Orco Bank (formerly CIBC First Caribbean Bank) and is also reachable via telephone 542-2243 or email infoxm@OMCarib.org

**Domain Affairs Walk-ins**

The Ministry of Public Housing, Spatial Planning, Environment and Infrastructure VROMI Domain Affairs Department informs the public that walk-in hours for domain affairs services will be available every Thursday from 9:00am to 11:00am. No appointment is necessary. For more information, contact domainaffairs@sintmaarten.gov.org or call 542-4292 ext 2425.

**Free Senior Yoga**

Gentle stretch and breath Senior Yoga, in person, at the Lions Club Community Center in Sucker Garden, Mondays and Fridays from 10:00-11:00am. Mats provided. Also, streamed live on Facebook at Yoga with Lisa SXM. For more info contact Lisa at 554-0115 or email davisburnettlisa@gmail.com.

**Volunteers Needed**

St. Maarten AIDS Foundation is looking for motivated women and men to become facilitators for Girl Power and Real talk workshops. For more information call 523-2626 or 553-2626 or email: coordinatorsxmaidsfoundation@gmail.com

**Church Service**

Island Church invites you to its Sunday Morning services from 10 to 11 o'clock in the Simpson Bay Resort Conference Center in Pelican Key. Follow us on Facebook at Island Church SXM for the live stream. Visit our website at islandchurchsxm.com. Email: [info@islandchurchsxm.com](mailto:info@islandchurchsxm.com) for more information.

**Club Meeting**

Calling all book lovers, no matter your age or gender! Join The Happy Bookers for laughs, literary love affairs (on the page!), and occasional existential crises disguised as book discussions. They meet once a month to discuss a wide array of books. WhatsApp +590690663716 for more information.

**Toastmasters Meets**

Creative Intellect Toastmasters meets the first and third Sundays of each month 5:00pm at the John Larmonie Center, Longwall Road 20, Philipsburg, or online via Zoom. For more information about the club, visit Creative Intellect Toastmasters Club on Facebook, email creative.intellect.tmc@gmail.com or calling: 586-5172.

**Youth Wing**

Persons 13-20 years old are invited to join SAF Youth wing. We organize monthly meetings at the St. Maarten AIDS Foundation office, located in the Sun Building Cole Bay. For more information call 523-2626 or 553-2626 or email: coordinatorsxmaidsfoundation@gmail.com

**Volunteers Needed**

Animal Defenders SXM could use some volunteers to help feed cats and dogs at several different locations (own transportation is important). We are also looking for help with admin work and creative computer skills. Please call or contact ADS for more information at 553-3116.

**Volunteer.sx Registration**

St. Maarten Development Fund (SMDF) and Foresee Foundation invite persons and non-profit organisations to register on volunteer.sx to find volunteering opportunities and/or to post volunteer events. To register go to volunteer.sx, follow the sign up process.

**St. Maarten Bridge**

The St. Maarten Duplicate Bridge Club is now meeting Tuesday nights at 7:15pm flexible venue. Bring a partner for a fun night of bridge. US \$10 per person, coffee and water provided, cash bar. Proof of COVID vaccination is required, masks optional. For information call Jan Peter 520-0594.

**AA Meetings**

Al-Anon is a non-profit 12-step programme of men and women who may have a common problem and solution to stop drinking. The support group meets at Red Cross on Airport Boulevard every Monday, Wednesday and Friday at 6:00pm, and on Sundays at Guana Bay Beach (near old restaurant) at 8:30am.

**Club Meeting**

Elite Soualiga Toastmasters Club meets virtually on Zoom from 2:00 to 3:30pm on the first and fourth Sunday of every month. For more information, please email: elite.soualigatm@gmail.com.

**Consular Services**

The Office of the Honorary Consul of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana operates on Wednesdays from 2:00 to 5:30pm and on Saturdays from 10:00am to 2:30pm by appointment only. For more information call 527-3198, or 527-0704. email: [guyana-honorary-consulsxm@gmail.com](mailto:guyana-honorary-consulsxm@gmail.com), [guyanaconsulatesxm@gmail.com](mailto:guyanaconsulatesxm@gmail.com)

**Homework Guidance**

Oranje Community School is looking for dynamic youth leaders and homework guidance persons. Pass by the Oranje Community School at 11:00am or call 580-2882.

**Positive Thinking**

Brahma Kumaris St. Maarten invites persons to its ongoing free meditation and Positive Thinking courses at Raj Yoga Centre, 16 Front Street. Call 524-2554 or 542-0541 for more information.

**Club Meeting**

Soualiga Corporate Toastmasters Club meets at the new Government Administration Building on the second and fourth Wednesday every month from 5:30 to 7:00pm.

**Club Meeting**

SXM Achievers Toastmasters Club meets on Zoom every second and fourth Thursday (except on holidays) of the month from 7:30 to 9:00pm. All are welcome to join. Please email [sxmachieverspresident@gmail.com](mailto:sxmachieverspresident@gmail.com) for the Zoom meeting details.

**Community Service**

Is your organization seeking assistance with various tasks such as cleaning, washing, gardening, moving, carpeting, painting, maintenance, and more? Contact the SJIS-Probation Department at 526-4322, 542-3449, or [lloyd.beaton@sjis-sxm.org](mailto:lloyd.beaton@sjis-sxm.org) to explore how you can become a community service workplace. This opportunity is available for non-profit community or governmental organizations. Community Service assistance is provided free of charge!

**Foster Parents Needed**

Foundation Judiciary Institutes Windward Islands (FJIWI)/ Stichting Justitie Inrichtingen Bovenwinden (SJIB), is looking for foster parents: Interested persons ages 24-67 can apply. Contact 526-4310.

**Volunteers Needed**

St. Maarten Animal Welfare Foundation is seeking volunteers for special activities. For more information call 520-8887.

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## St. Maarten U17 cricketers take on Anguilla counterparts in friendly

CUL DE SAC—A friendly match between St. Maarten U17 cricketers and Anguilla is set to bowl off at the Caribe Lumber Ballpark on Sunday.

The team from Anguilla is from the Blue Dolphins Cricket Club.

The team from St. Maarten comprises Jethan and Jaeden Bramble, who were members of the Leeward Islands U17 team in the West Indies U17 team in Trinidad. Another member of the squad with regional

experience is Kyan MacCowan, who was a member of the Leeward Islands U15 team for the regional tournament. The other members of the local squad are Captain Kaedani David, Krish Sidhwa, Josh Hodge, Gursham Netram, Rishi Pokhriyal, Nowraj Balram, Jordan Anderson, and R. Singh.

The whole Anguilla team reads Denari Neckles (c), Myles Barrow, Devontae Bernard, Okeif Byron, Kyshaun Connor, Tabari Connor, Fremi Gumbs, Orecia Lewis,

Daejon Neckles, D'ray Neckles, Ajalon Richardson, Shaiquan Roberts, Michael Skellekie, Wilfred Richardson-Vasquez, Clayton Thomas.

Denari Neckles, the captain, is the oldest at 17 years old.

Lewis is a 16-year-old girl who is expected to compete with the boys. She is the first to be invited to Leewards Under-19 practice from Anguilla.

This friendly match will allow both teams to test their skills against their counterparts.

## Offensive line still Texans' issue as they prepare for Bucs

LOS ANGELES --Following an offseason of personnel changes on the offensive line, the Houston Texans opened the season last week against the Los Angeles Rams and looked like nothing changed.

Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud was sacked three times and pressured on more than 41 percent of his dropbacks, perNextGen Stats, during a 14-9 road loss to the Rams. The Texans, who host the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Monday night, remain a work in progress in terms of providing suitable protection for Stroud. Their vulnerability will be challenged again considering the Bucs pressured Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Penix Jr. on more than 43 percent of his dropbacks in Week 1.

"Their front, it really comes from Todd's philosophy," said Texans coach DeMeco Ryans, referencing Buccaneers coach Todd Bowles. "They're going to bring a lot of exotic pressures. There will be pressure from safeties, nickels, everybody is coming and ... they do a really good job of disguising it. We just really have to do a great job as an offense when the picture changes. How are we reacting and responding?"

"Communicating the proper way when the picture changes, that will be the challenge for us this week," Ryans added.



Los Angeles Rams linebacker Byron Young (0) sacks Houston Texans quarterback C.J. Stroud (7) during the second quarter at SoFi Stadium. (Kiyoshi Mio-Imagn Images.)

With Stroud under extreme duress, Houston receiver Nico Collins had only three receptions (on five targets) for 25 yards against the Rams. Far and away the Texans' top option in the passing game, Collins stands a superior shot of being unlocked if the Texans execute better on offense.

"Offensively, when you go back to the game on Sunday, we have so many plays where we're playing behind the sticks and we're not doing things that we're trained to do," Ryans said. "We're not doing things that are conducive to staying on track, and being able to run our offense in that type of fashion, it's going to be hard to get the ball to a certain player here or there."

"We've got to do the things that we're coached to do, make sure we're staying

on track offensively, making sure everybody is on the same page, and we're putting ourselves in position to make positive plays. When we have those positive plays, then it opens up the offense for us to be able to get the ball to whoever we want to get the ball to."

The Buccaneers, who won their season opener 23-20 at Atlanta, welcomed left tackle Tristan Wirfs (knee) back to practice on Thursday, a positive development for that unit after right tackle Luke Goedeke was a non-participant.

Bowles revealed Goedeke played through a foot injury on Sunday and that his status for the remainder of the week and Monday night's tilt was undetermined. Graham Barton manned left tackle in place of Wirfs against the Falcons, while Charlie Heck replaced Goedeke in Thursday's practice.

Bowles was coy regarding Wirfs' potential availability against the Texans and echoed similar sentiment regarding receiver Chris Godwin Jr. (ankle), who also practiced on Thursday. Wirfs and Godwin will have their game-time status determined as the week of preparation unfolds.

Should Wirfs, a two-time first-team All-Pro, return to the fold, it would provide Tampa Bay a measure of normalcy up front. That's something the Texans are seeking as well because center Jake Andrews (ankle) did not practice on Thursday.

"They're shuffling just like we are," Bowles said. "Right now, we're just trying to get our feet under us. It's not about advantages, it's about us taking care of us and playing fast."

"Whatever they have, they have; whatever we have, we have. We've got to go down there and try to win the game no matter what."

## Bristol night race presents last chance for 4 drivers to avoid elimination

BRISTOL --Welcome to the Round of 12 and keep title hopes alive. It's a terribly tall task for all four.

Of the quartet, Dillon, Bowman and Berry have the short-track background to perhaps work their way to a clutch victory that would propel them to the next round, whereas SVG's problems have occurred on ovals, superspeedways and anything other than road-course layouts.

Dillon has a pair of victories at Richmond in his No. 3 Chevrolet, while Bowman has also won at Richmond and Martinsville, so the possibility exists for more short-track checkers if one hits on the right setup.

Hendrick Motorsports vice chairman Jeff Gordon

hasn't written off his driver Bowman and the No. 48 team, saying, "They're going to have to get a gift at Bristol. I'm not counting them out yet."

After notching career win No. 59 outside St. Louis on Sunday, 44-year-old Denny Hamlin said on his "Actions Detrimental" podcast that he doesn't need to reach the 60-win mark this season because he has 80 races left to drive the No. 11 on his contract through 2027.

But the Joe Gibbs Racing star, a four-time victor at Bristol, may be better off winning that 60th race and not having it hang over his head -- especially as it can help him score that elusive first Cup title.

Taking the checkers first in two of the past four Bristol races, including the lone event in 2023 and the first of two last season, Hamlin cruises 11th in modern-era Cup wins, one behind Kevin Harvick and four behind Kyle Busch. After that, it's a baker's dozen to catch Dale Earnhardt.

In last summer's Bristol 500-lapper under the lights, Bowman topped 34 circuits, but Kyle Larson completely dominated by pacing the way for 462 laps to beat teammate Chase Elliott by over seven seconds.

However, the 2021 Cup champ might be looking over his shoulder at times Saturday night.

In Illinois last weekend, Larson clearly spun out

Ryan Blaney as the pair of former title-winners were racing together off Turn 4 with nearly 100 laps to go, though Blaney's No. 12 Ford rallied to finish fourth.

The top-five showing didn't soothe the Team Penske racer.

"I just wanted to know what I did to deserve it," Blaney said after speaking with Larson. "He just said he made a mistake. That's fine, make mistakes, but at the end of the day I still got turned. ... That's just one I gotta remember."

And Bristol surely ranks first in the standings of speedways that are a place of remembrance for past grievances.

# Week 2 NFL Capsules

## Cincinnati Bengals vs. Jacksonville Jaguars

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Bengals -3.5, Total 49.5

Notoriously slow starters since Zac Taylor and Joe Burrow arrived, the Bengals were last 2-0 to open a season in 2018. Burrow played in preseason games with the idea of sparking the offense in September, then threw for 113 yards in Week 1. Jacksonville attempts to keep the Bengals down and get to 2-0 out of the gate - also for the first time since 2018 - but Burrow averaged three TDs per game in his last eight home starts. New Jaguars head coach Liam Coen deployed No. 2 pick Travis Hunter at wide receiver and he led the team with six receptions. Hunter could get more time at cornerback on Sunday to assist in the mission of covering Ja'Marr Chase and Tee Higgins. The Bengals WR duo combined for 14 TD catches at home last season.

## Dallas Cowboys vs. New York Giants

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Cowboys -5.5, Total 44.5

Without Parsons, the Cowboys did almost enough to upset the Philadelphia Eagles in a wild opening night game that included a fast-break pace in the first half and a long weather delay. Dak Prescott was dialed in from the jump and could've approached outlandish numbers if not for three critical drops by WR CeeDee Lamb. After spending time on hand-eye coordination this week, Lamb can get back to the business of harassing the Giants as he goes for his fourth 100-yard game in six career meetings. Prescott has won 13 consecutive games against the Giants with 30 TDs (29 TD passes) and a 102.4 rating in 15 career games against New York. There are questions around the Giants QB situation with rookie first-round pick Jaxson Dart waiting in the wings. Russell Wilson had an interception overturned by penalty and never found the end zone in his first start with the Giants last week, a 21-6 defeat at Washington. There was little room to run and LT Andrew Thomas (foot) missed the game.

## Detroit Lions vs. Chicago Bears

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Lions -5.5, Total 46.5

A little game of lost and found is in order for the Lions and Bears as former

offensive coordinator Ben Johnson makes his return to Detroit. Without him at Green Bay last week, the offense was erratic and blocking left a lot of to be desired. New coordinator John Morton gets back to the drawing board to tackle a Bears defense embarrassed on Monday night by first-time starter J.J. McCarthy and the Vikings. Minnesota rallied from a 17-6 deficit to shock Johnson and the Bears, 27-24. A focus on ground-and-pound should be expected from Detroit, which had only one touchdown and a single pass play of 20-plus yards in Week 1. The Lions' dynamic rushing duo of Jahmyr Gibbs and David Montgomery was limited to 44 yards on 20 carries. The Lions reached the 30-point mark in 10 regular-season games while averaging 409.5 yards per game. Chicago changed out three starting offensive linemen in the offseason, but QB Caleb Williams never appeared fully comfortable in the pocket last week. Williams passed for 590 yards (295 per game) and five TDs with zero interceptions and a 102.8 rating in two starts against the Lions as a rookie.

## Tennessee Titans vs. Los Angeles Rams

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Rams -5.5, Total 41.5

Puka Nacua's fifth career 10-catch game was a highlight for the Rams and Matthew Stafford in Week 1, when the QB cleared 60,000 career passing yards in his 223rd game. It was just the first game of Cam Ward's career at Denver, but the Titans were well within striking distance most of the game. Ward had zero turnovers but faced constant pressure, passing for 112 yards and completing 12 of 28 attempts. The Rams' front seven is a beast to block because of the number of penetrating threats an offensive line must account for, which makes it a bad time for Titans LT JC Latham (hip) to miss time. The Titans are capable of getting to quarterbacks, too. DT Jeffery Simmons had three sacks the last time he faced the Rams and had a sack and forced fumble in Week 1.

## Miami Dolphins vs. New England Patriots

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Dolphins -1.5, Total 43.5

Patriots QB Drake Maye was a teenager the last time the Patriots won in Miami (2019) and head coach Mike Vrabel cautioned New England not to view the Dolphins



Cincinnati Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow (9) throws. (Ken Blaze-Imagn Images.)

as easy prey despite a dud at Indianapolis last week. The Patriots played well enough to beat the Raiders last week but came up short in the red zone with field goals on two of three possessions inside the Las Vegas 20. Miami didn't score until the fourth quarter of a 33-8 loss and issues on the offensive line and timing between QB Tua Tagovailoa and his receivers were glaring. Tagovailoa had a performance coach Mike McDaniel described as "less than expected" with three turnovers. Vrabel said the combination of South Florida weather and the circling critique of Miami's Week 1 output leave the Patriots in a sticky spot. Tagovailoa has never lost to the Patriots (7-0) and posted an 11-0 TD-to-INT ratio in his final five

home starts last season.

## New Orleans Saints vs. San Francisco 49ers

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: 49ers -4.5, Total 41.5

Neither team -- nor fan base -- likely expected to see Mac Jones vs. Spencer Rattler when the 2025 schedule was released, but here we are in the Superdome. It will be Jones' 50th start but first for the 49ers, who could be without Brock Purdy (toe) for the rest of the month. Rattler won the QB job for the Saints and makes his fifth career home start in a matchup of teams trying to generate consistent offense. The 49ers (17-13 winners at Seattle) escaped with a win in the opener but Christian McCaffrey had 31 touches in his return from an injury-riddled 2024

season. Rattler can lean on RB Alvin Kamara to move the chains. Kamara and McCaffrey are two of four active players averaging at least 100 yards from scrimmage per game (Colts RB Jonathan Taylor, Eagles RB Saquon Barkley).

## New York Jets vs. Buffalo Bills

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Bills -6.5, Total 46.5

The Jets came out of a Week 1 loss to the Steelers with plenty of positives - 394 total yards, a franchise-best in an opener in the past 11 seasons - in Justin Fields' first start. Perhaps the biggest of the superlatives from coach Aaron Glenn was the play of a dominant offensive line, which feeds into the game plan for Week 2. RB

Breece Hall averaged 158 yards per game in two previous home matchups with the Bills, and keep-away is a reasonable game plan. Buffalo had a league-best 41 points and 497 total yards, and the Bills needed every last one of them because the Ravens rang up multiple big plays with 40 points and 432 yards from scrimmage. QB Josh Allen and WR Keon Coleman connected better than ever (8-112-1), particularly in the fourth quarter.

## Pittsburgh Steelers vs. Seattle Seahawks

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET.

FanDuel odds: Steelers -2.5, Total 39.5

Quarterbacks unafraid to start over are the focal point with Aaron Rodgers on the verge of more history if the Steelers can keep him upright. LT Broderick Jones allowed three of the four sacks Pittsburgh gave up last week in a 34-32 win over the Jets. After four TD tosses in that game, Rodgers is one behind Green Bay predecessor Brett Favre (508) on the NFL's all-time career TD pass list. Rodgers also could clear Philip Rivers (63,440) for the sixth-most regular-season passing yards in NFL history. He enters Sunday with 63,196. Seattle lost its home opener when new QB Sam Darnold dropped the ball in a collision with his offensive line that sealed San Francisco's 17-13 win. He was laser-locked on new No. 1 wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba, Darnold's target on 59.1 percent of his passes. The Seahawks could be without playmaking safety Devon Witherspoon, who didn't practice Wednesday, in a matchup with their former lead receiver, DK Metcalf.

## Baltimore Ravens vs. Cleveland Browns

Sunday, 1 p.m. ET

FanDuel odds: Ravens -10.5, Total 44.5

Joe Flacco won a Super Bowl with the Ravens and no doubt Baltimore didn't expect to see him back at age 40 as a starter in the division. Flacco, the franchise leader in passing yards (38,245) and TD passes (212), is backed by a dominant defense that held the Bengals under 10 yards of offense in the second half last week. But Cleveland still lost, and now the test is Lamar Jackson, Derrick Henry and Zay Flowers, who put up 40 points at Buffalo - and still lost. Jackson replaced Flacco as Baltimore's starter and has dominated the Browns and excelled at home (21 TDs, three INTs in nine home starts last season).

## WADA alleges non-compliance of Kenya's Anti-Doping Agency

LONDON-- Kenya's Anti-Doping Agency (ADAK) has been found non-compliant with WADA's (World Anti-Doping Agency) code on Thursday, resulting in consequences that will take effect next month unless the East African nation addresses deficiencies.

In a statement WADA's Executive Committee said it had followed recommendations from its independent Compliance Review Committee after ADAK failed to address critical requirements following an audit carried out in May last year. "Under Article 9.3.1 of the International Standard for Code Compliance by Signatories (ISCCS), the Signatory has 21 days following the date of receipt of the formal notice of

non-compliance to dispute WADA's allegation of non-compliance, as well as the proposed consequences and/or the reinstatement conditions proposed by the Agency," the statement said.

"It should be noted that the decision (including the consequences) will enter into force on 2 October 2025, unless the decision is challenged before the same date."

Under the measures, ADAK will lose all WADA privileges, including funding and participation in agency programs and Kenyan representatives will be barred from holding positions on WADA boards or committees.

Kenya could also become ineligible to host WADA-

sanctioned events at regional, continental or world level during any period of non-compliance.

"It is always disappointing when a signatory to the World Anti-Doping Code is alleged as non-compliant," WADA Director General, Olivier Niggli said.

"However, it is crucially important for the global system that Anti-Doping Organizations are held to the same high standards that we expect from athletes.

"We will continue to work with all non-compliant organisations to improve their programs so they can address their non-conformities and restore their compliance status for the good of athletes, inside those countries and internationally."



Chicago White Sox shortstop Colson Montgomery (12) hits a two-RBI single against the Tampa Bay Rays during the first inning at Rate Field. (Matt Marton-Imagn Images.)

## White Sox stay hot, down Rays again

CHICAGO --Colson Montgomery and Kyle Teel had two-run singles and Shane Smith pitched effectively into the sixth inning as the host Chicago White Sox defeated the Tampa Bay Rays 5-1 on Thursday.

Chicago (57-90) took two of three to keep Tampa Bay's American League playoff hopes wobbling.

The Rays fell six games

behind the Seattle Mariners, who play later Thursday, in the race for the third and final AL wild-card berth. The Texas Rangers, Cleveland Guardians and Kansas City Royals are also ahead of Tampa Bay (72-74).

Chandler Simpson went 4-for-4 for the Rays, who stranded seven runners and went 0-for-10 with men in scoring position. It was the

rookie's first four-hit game; he scored the Rays' lone run on Junior Caminero's RBI groundout in the eighth.

Simpson hit a leadoff single against Smith in the first inning and later stole second base. That marked Simpson's 40th steal of the season, making him the first AL rookie to reach that mark since Estuary Ruiz of the Athletics in 2023.

Smith (6-7) didn't blink, falling one out short of delivering a quality start for the third time in his past four outings.

The right-hander spaced four hits, one walk and four strikeouts in 5 1/3 shutout innings to help the White Sox win for the ninth time in 11 games.

Montgomery grounded a two-run single in the first inning to give the White Sox an early lead against left-hander Ian Seymour. That was Chicago's third hit in a four-batter span to start the game, but offense soon proved to be a challenge as Seymour retired eight of the next nine.

Chicago broke through in a three-run sixth. Reliever Eric Orze, recalled from Triple-A Durham before the game, yielded an RBI single to Michael A. Taylor that narrowly eluded Simpson's running attempt at the wall before Teel contributed a pinch-hit, two-run single to stretch the lead to 5-0.

Teel, a rookie who remained in the game at catcher, extended his on-base streak to 20 games, matching Toronto's Bo Bichette for the longest active run in the major leagues.

Chase Meidroth had two hits for Chicago.

Seymour (3-2) allowed three runs and five hits in 5 1/3 innings with two walks and five strikeouts.

Chicago won the season series 4-2.

## 'Hungry' Reds in playoff chase going into road series against Athletics

SACRAMENTO --The Cincinnati Reds are in the hunt for a playoff berth with just 10 percent of their regular season remaining.

Cincinnati has missed the postseason in 10 of the past 11 seasons, but the Reds can rev up their hopes Friday night when they open a three-game series against the Athletics at West Sacramento, Calif.

The Reds (74-72) entered Thursday just two games behind the New York Mets for the final National League wild-card spot. Cincinnati is fresh off taking two of three from both the Mets and the San Diego Padres, two teams ahead of them in the wild-card chase.

"Every win means everything at this point," Reds outfielder T.J. Friedl said after Wednesday's 2-1 win over the host Padres. "We're going to lay it on the line the rest of the season and see where we're at."

Avoiding sustained tailspins is important for Cincinnati, which was seven games over .500 on Aug. 19. But then the Reds lost 11 of their next 14 games to fall under .500 on Sept. 5.

The series in San Diego saw Cincinnati let a three-run lead get away on Monday and lose 4-3 in 10 innings. But the Reds bounced back with 4-2 and 2-1 victories.

Ely De La Cruz delivered the tying single in the eighth on Wednesday before stealing second and scoring on a pinch-hit single by Miguel Andujar.

"We knew we would have to step up in big ways," said Reds left-hander Andrew Abbott, who pitched eight stellar innings to earn the win on Wednesday. "We still (have to fight) our way to get in. I know the guys are going to play hungry and try to get (the playoff spot)."

The Athletics (67-80) are coming off a walk-off 5-4 victory over the visiting Boston Red Sox for just their fourth victory in the past 12 games.

Lawrence Butler delivered the game-winning single while Shea Langeliers and Nick Kurtz each blasted their 30th homer of the season.

Langeliers joins Terry Steinbach (35 in 1996) as the only primary catchers in franchise history to go deep 30 times in a season.

"It's really cool to be in the conversation with Steinbach," Langeliers said. "It goes back to preparation and just staying consistent to, ultimately, me having a good

season this year."

Kurtz reached 30 homers in his 102nd big league game, making him the seventh-fastest active player to reach the mark. Cody Bellinger is the fastest as he needed just 87 games in 2017 when he played for the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Kurtz joins "Bash Brothers" Jose Canseco (33 in 1986) and Mark McGwire (49 in 1987) as A's who hit 30 or more homers as a rookie.

"He's special," Butler said. "The kid goes out there and just has good at-bat after good at-bat every day. Him hitting 30 homers, for us, is no surprise. He's probably going to do it every year for the rest of his career."

Cincinnati right-hander Brady Singer (13-9, 3.98 ERA) will take the mound

Friday. The 29-year-old has won four straight decisions and six of his past seven.

Singer gave up one run and four hits over six innings while beating the Mets last Saturday.

He is 1-3 with a 4.85 ERA in 29 2/3 innings over five career starts against the A's. JJ Bleday is 2-for-5 with a homer off Singer.

Right-hander J.T. Ginn (3-6, 4.95) is slated to start for the Athletics. Ginn, 26, gave up one run and five hits in five innings while beating the host Los Angeles Angels 17-4 on Saturday.

Ginn faced the Reds last season and gave up four runs and four hits over five innings. Will Benson and Tyler Stephenson homered off him.

## Jays' Gausman twirls complete game shutout against Astros

CANADA--Kevin Gausman hurled a brilliant 2-hit shutout, Davis Schneider homered and the Toronto Blue Jays defeated the visiting Houston Astros 6-0 on Thursday afternoon.

Gausman (10-10) walked one and fanned nine to pitch his fourth career complete game -- the first of this season -- and the second shutout of his career. He threw 79 of 100 pitches for strikes in the 2-hour, 7-minute game.

Schneider added a sacrifice fly to record two RBIs in the rubber match of the three-game series. Addison Barger also drove in a pair of runs with a double and a sac fly.

The Astros (79-68) still won the season series 4-2 over the Blue Jays (84-62) in a clash between division leaders.

Toronto caught a couple of breaks to take a 2-0 lead in the first against Cristian Javier (1-3). George Springer led off with an infield hit on a check-swing dribbler near the third-base line. Javier made a good play but first baseman Christian Walker could not hold the one-hop throw.

Nathan Lukes then lined an RBI double to left over Taylor Trammell's head. Barger's harmless looking pop turned into an RBI double when it dropped in shallow right among a clus-

ter of indecisive fielders.

Schneider homered to left on an 0-1 fastball to lead off the second.

Gausman breezed through his first three innings before allowing Jeremy Pena's single to open the fourth. Carlos Correa singled with one out to put runners at the corners. Gausman stymied the threat with a foul out and a strikeout.

Daulton Varsho led off the bottom of the fourth with a triple to right center that just eluded converging outfielders and scored on Schneider's fly to left.

After the sacrifice fly, Javier retired eight in a row to complete his outing. He allowed four runs, six hits and one walk while striking out six in six innings.

Lance McCullers Jr. replaced Javier and pitched a perfect seventh before allowing two runs in the eighth. Springer worked a leadoff walk, Lukes singled and Barger hit a fly ball to right that glanced off right fielder Jesus Sanchez's glove, scoring Springer. Barger was credited with a sacrifice fly and RBI on the play.

Varsho capped the scoring with an RBI single to left.

Gausman retired 15 in a row before walking Pena with one out in the ninth.

## Dylan Beavers comes through again as Orioles sweep Pirates

BALTIMORE --Dylan Beavers' tiebreaking infield single in the seventh inning allowed the Baltimore Orioles to win another close game against Pittsburgh, completing a three-game sweep of the visiting Pirates with a 3-2 victory Thursday afternoon.

The Orioles (70-77) have won eight of their last nine games and finished a 5-1 homestand that began against the Los Angeles Dodgers. Baltimore scored a total of eight runs in sweeping the Pirates, with the first two outcomes also by one-run margins but in extra innings.

Baltimore's Jackson Holliday went 2-for-4 to push the former No. 1 prospect's batting average to above .250 for the first time in nearly a month. Beavers also had the winning single in the 10th inning Wednesday night.

Rookie reliever Grant Wolfram (3-0) notched the victory with one scoreless inning. Keegan Akin worked the ninth for his fifth save despite Alexander Canario's one-out infield single. The game ended when pinch runner Oneil Cruz was thrown out on an attempted steal of second base by catcher Alex Jackson.

Canario homered and joined Jared Triolo and Nick Gonzales with two hits for the Pirates (64-83), who've lost six in a row via sweeps by the Milwaukee Brewers and Orioles.

Starting pitchers Johan Oviedo of the Pirates and Cade Povich of the Orioles both went 5 2/3 innings and allowed two runs on five hits. Povich struck out six and walked two, while Oviedo fanned five and walked three.

Colin Holderman (0-2) was charged with the loss when he was responsible for the run when Beavers singled in Holliday off Evan Sisk.

The Pirates put two runners on base with two outs in the eighth but didn't convert when Kade Stroud struck out Spencer Horwitz.

Pittsburgh scored first on Gonzales' first-inning single. The Orioles posted the next two runs, with Emmanuel Rivera's first-inning groundout and Coby Mayo's second-inning single providing the runs.

The Pirates had two hits in the first inning, matching their total from Wednesday night's 10-inning loss.

Canario's sixth homer of the season leading off the second tied it for the Pirates.

# Arfsten among those auditioning for a U.S. team in transition

COLUMBUS, Ohio -- Max Arfsten is not paranoid, but every time he crosses the white line onto the soccer field he feels like the entire world is watching.

Actually, it's the weight of the World Cup as the Columbus Crew defender makes a late push for the 26-player U.S. men's national team roster for the tournament next summer in North America.

"I'm auditioning every match, for sure," he told Field Level Media after the U.S. defeated Japan 2-0 in Columbus on Tuesday. "I don't ever think anything is handed or given to me no matter what. So honestly, training is the same thing. It's an audition. I'm trying to prove myself every single time I step on the field. That's my mentality."

The 24-year-old from Fresno, Calif., wasn't even on the U.S. radar until coach Mauricio Pochettino, who marked one year on the job on Wednesday, debuted him on Jan. 18 against Venezuela.

Since then, Arfsten has a goal and four assists in 12 matches, including setting up Alex Zendejas for the first goal vs. Japan.

"Just waiting for my moment," Zendejas said of his first U.S. start since 2023. "It's crazy to take all this in. I didn't expect to get called up. Just trying to take advantage of every opportunity."

Arfsten, Zendejas, Cristian Roldan and Folarin Balogun improved their stock in the match thanks to a change in schematics.

For the first time in his 18 matches in charge, Pochettino rolled out a 3-4-2-1 formation after another dreadful performance on Sept. 6 using a 4-2-3-1 in a 2-0 loss to South Korea.

The switch allowed more players to work in familiar areas. Arfsten was effective at left wingback for the Crew, but playing in a back four for the U.S. exposed his defensive shortcomings. Against Japan he was able to do what he does best -- run at defenders and make crosses into the box like the pinpoint pass to Zendejas' left foot for the goal.

It was the same on the right side with Alex Freeman, 21, of Orlando City, who has less experience than Arfsten (nine U.S. appearances) but is keeping himself in the roster conversation for now.

"We have players that play in this new formation (with their clubs)," Pochettino said.

He also noted center back Chris Richards is more comfortable playing in a back three for Crystal Palace in the English Premier League.

With Arfsten and Freeman on the wings, it allowed Zendejas on the right and Christian Pulisic opposite him to have space beneath Balogun in the No. 9 role.

That's how Pulisic was able to zip an entry ball to Balogun for the second goal vs. Japan, Balogun's first since June 27, 2024, registered against Panama in the Copa America.

"We are so pleased because he, with his performance, makes us to doubt about (our roster choices)," Pochettino said of Zendejas. "With this type of performance, he's in the race for the roster for the World Cup."

Zendejas, who plays for Club America in Mexico's Liga MX, has an ally in the U.S. captain.

"I've played with him since we were 14 years old, so I've always known what a great player he is," Pulisic said. "He really showed this camp something different, so I'm really happy for him. He deserves it."

Roldan was vacationing after the Seattle Sounders won the CONCACAF Champions Cup when he got the call-up. He played alongside Tyler Adams in the midfield vs. Japan, and like the other players on the roster bubble, he impressed Pochettino.

"I am so happy because they understand or understood that they need to perform in the way that we expect," Pochettino said. "It's not about to win or to lose the games ... but to perform in the way that we expect and the way that we want."

There was relief following the win over Japan, No. 17 in the FIFA rankings, which ended a five-match losing streak to teams in the top 25 while being outscored 11-1, though there are still hurdles for players such as Arfsten to make the World Cup roster.

As good as the performance was Tuesday, it was against basically a B team for Japan and many of the so-called regulars for the USMNT were not brought in for the past two matches for a variety of reasons.



US Men's National Team defender Max Arfsten (18) controls the ball. (Joseph Maiorana-Imagn Images.)

Among the missing were forwards and midfielders Johnny Cardoso, Weston McKennie, Yunus Musa, Ricardo Pepi, Gio Reyna, Malik Tillman and Haji Wright. Defenders absent included Mark McKenzie, Antonee Robinson, Miles Robinson and Joe Scally.

Another consideration in selecting the right per-

sonnel: The U.S. likely will employ four in the back depending on the matchup.

"I think it's good to have different plans, approaches to the games, different formations," Pochettino said.

He has four more matches this year for evaluation beginning Oct. 10 against Ecuador in Austin, Texas, and Australia on Oct. 14 in

Commerce City, Colo.

At his post-match press conference on Tuesday, Pochettino said he may rely more on European-based players for these autumn friendlies, because in the October window MLS will be entering the final week of the regular season while the November matches will be during the playoffs.

For Arfsten, the opportunities to make the team could be limited but Pochettino likes what he's seen so far.

"It's a player that we really believe in from Day 1, because I see in the way that he is, his character, his personality, the characteristics how he is like a player," Pochettino said. "I think it's a combo that we really love, we really like. He's a very intelligent, very smart guy."

Arfsten was in mid-sentence answering a question after Pochettino's press conference when the coach walked by. With a smile, Pochettino gave him a hug, congratulated him and wished him luck.

Maybe it was a sign of things to come, maybe not, but Arfsten is staying focused.

"I just try to take it moment by moment," he said. "I can't think too much in the future, but I'm definitely going to keep working hard and just do everything I can to get called into the upcoming camp."

## FA charge Chelsea with 74 breaches of rules regarding agents and intermediaries

LONDON-- Chelsea were hit with 74 charges by the Football Association on Thursday after the London club were accused of breaching regulations covering football agents, intermediaries and third-party investment in players spanning more than a decade.

The FA did not elaborate on the charges but Chelsea said the matters were 'self-reported' by the club after the change in ownership in May 2022.

"The conduct that is the subject of the charges ranges from 2009 to 2022 and primarily relates to events which occurred between the 2010-11 to 2015-16 playing seasons," the FA said in a statement.

At the time, the London club was owned by Roman Abramovich, but the Russian billionaire put Chelsea up for sale in 2022 following sanctions after Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Abramovich, who bought the club in 2003, completed the sale to an investment group led by

Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital.

"During a thorough due diligence process prior to completion of the purchase, the ownership group became aware of potentially incomplete financial reporting concerning historical transactions and other potential breaches of FA rules," Chelsea said in a statement.

"Immediately upon the completion of the purchase, the club self-reported these matters to all relevant regulators, including the FA.

"The club has demonstrated unprecedented transparency during this process, including by giving comprehensive access to the club's files and historical data.

"We will continue working collaboratively with the FA to conclude this matter as swiftly as possible."

The FA said Chelsea have until September 19 to respond to the charge.

A source at the club told Reuters they had opened

their books to the FA so England's soccer governing body can make educated judgements on the historical payments.

The source could not reveal the nature of the charges or the irregular payments as it is an ongoing legal matter but confirmed they were related to the men's team.

Chelsea are also hoping the FA takes their transparency into account if the alleged breaches result in sanctions which could range from fines, points deductions or even transfer bans.

**PREVIOUS PUNISHMENTS**

FIFA had handed Chelsea a transfer ban in 2019 after they were found guilty of breaching rules regarding 29 overseas players under the age of 18.

In July 2023, European soccer body UEFA had reached a settlement with Chelsea over the submission of incomplete financial information, related to "historical transactions"

between 2012-2019.

At the time, the owners said they had proactively reported instances of potentially incomplete financial reporting to UEFA.

Two weeks later, the Premier League said it was investigating potential financial rule breaches at Chelsea under Abramovich's ownership.

The Times reported that the inquiry encompasses multi-million-pound payments to undisclosed offshore entities, with connections to football intermediaries.

In July this year, Chelsea were also fined 31 million euros (\$36.31 million) by UEFA for breaches of its financial rules by not complying with the football earnings rule and breaching the squad cost rule.

Chelsea had agreed to a four-year settlement with UEFA to avoid the risk of being hit with a further 60 million euros if they do not get their finances in order.

# Madrid and Warsaw to host men's and women's Champions League finals in 2027

TIRANA - Madrid and Warsaw will host the 2027 men's and women's Champions League finals respectively, UEFA announced on Thursday, but European soccer's governing body did not take a decision on requests from LaLiga and Serie A to play a league match abroad.

The Executive Committee met in Tirana on Thursday and decided the men's Champions League final will be played at the Estadio Metropolitan, home of Atletico Madrid and the venue where Liverpool beat Tottenham Hotspur in the 2019 final. The women's final will be held at the National Stadium

in Warsaw. UEFA also announced that its Super Cup match next year will take place in Salzburg, Austria. The 2026 men's Champions League final will be held at the Puskas Arena in Budapest, while the women's showpiece match will take place at the Ullevaal Stadion in Oslo.

Meanwhile, Italy's football federation (FIGC) in July gave Serie A the green light to allow AC Milan to take on Como in Perth, Australia, while LaLiga hopes to move Villarreal's game against Barcelona to Miami in December after the Royal Spanish Football Federa-

tion (RFEF) last month approved the request.

UEFA said it would consult all stakeholders, including fans, before making a decision on the Serie A and LaLiga matches.

"The Executive Committee discussed the requests from the RFEF and FIGC to ap-

prove the playing of one domestic league match each outside the home country, in particular outside the UEFA territory," UEFA said in a statement.

"The committee acknowledged it as an important and growing issue but expressed the desire to ensure that it

has the views of all stakeholders before coming to a final decision.

"There are many issues to resolve and as the European governing body, UEFA has a responsibility to take all such factors into account."

Earlier this month, supporters' groups from across

Europe had voiced their opposition to attempts from European leagues to stage domestic matches outside the country.

They labelled the plans 'absurd' and said the concept undermines the rules of the competition for short-term financial gain.

## Dodgers rediscover winning form heading into series with rival Giants

LOS ANGELES-- The Dodgers appear to have regained their edge as they try to solidify their hold on first place Friday when they hit the road to face the San Francisco Giants for a three-game series.

The heated rivals each have 16 games remaining in the regular season, which includes seven against each other. Following this weekend's series in the Bay Area, the teams have a four-game series next weekend in Los Angeles.

After stumbling on their last road trip -- losing the first five games at Pittsburgh and Baltimore -- the Dodgers have rebounded with a four-game winning streak led by impressive starting pitching. They led the National League West by three games prior to the San Diego Padres' game Thursday night.

The past week for the Dodgers has included a pair of no-hit bids that were dashed in the ninth inning -- plus Tuesday's game when young right-hander Emmet Sheehan was perfect through five innings.

Yoshinobu Yamamoto (11-8, 2.72 ERA), who's slated to start Friday, was one out away from a no-hitter Saturday at Baltimore when Jackson Holliday hit a home run. The Dodgers never recorded another out as the Orioles finished off a 4-3 victory.

Los Angeles responded with a win streak that featured Tyler Glasnow and Blake Treinen combining for eight no-hit innings Monday night before settling for a 3-1 win over the Colorado Rockies. It also included Wednesday's 9-0 victory over the Rockies when Mookie Betts hit a grand slam. Betts has multiple RBIs in five consecutive games and 13 total in the stretch

Teoscar Hernandez hit his third home run in two games, while the team welcomed the recent returns of third baseman Max Muncy, left-hander Alex Vesia and utility

man Tommy Edman. Catcher Will Smith continues to work through a hand injury that limited him to one game over the past week.

"I just know that the vibe and the feel of it, as far as the camaraderie, the energy -- it's definitely one that's been more positive as of late," Betts said. "We just got to keep that positive energy around us. Just go to San Fran and ... play one game at a time."

The Giants are eight games behind the Dodgers in the NL West, but only two games out of a wild-card spot entering Thursday's play. San Francisco has gone 13-4 since

Aug. 23 while winning five out of six series.

"First of all, we've got to win," Giants infielder Wilmer Flores said this week, according to the San Jose Mercury News. "I don't think it matters where we are in the standings. If we control how we play, honestly, we could be a game out, we could be in the playoffs, we could be out, all you can do today is play well to win the game."

The Giants have benefited from the production of Rafael Devers and Willy Adames of late. Devers was acquired from the Boston Red Sox in June and is batting .333

with six home runs and 18 RBIs over his past 14 games. Adames, who was signed as a free agent in the offseason, is batting .304 with six home runs and 15 RBIs over his past 13 games.

San Francisco is set to send right-hander Justin Verlander (3-10, 4.09) to the mound against Yamamoto. The 42-year-old Verlander is 3-1 with a 3.38 ERA in four regular-season starts against the Dodgers. That does not include going 0-1 with a 3.75 ERA in two starts in the 2017 World Series as a member of the Houston Astros.



Grenadiers' Filippo Ganna at the Vuelta a Espana.

### Ganna glides to Vuelta time trial win, Almeida gains on Vingegaard

VALLADOLID, Spain-- Italian Filippo Ganna tore through the final third of Thursday's shortened individual time trial to win stage 18 of the Vuelta a Espana in Valladolid, and third-placed Joao Almeida gained 10 seconds on overall leader Jonas Vingegaard.

Time trial specialist Ganna repeated his success of two years ago in the same city, but had an agonisingly long wait after the Ineos Grenadiers rider was fifth out of the gate, setting a time of 13 minutes. With the aim of ensuring greater protection for the stage after the disruptions caused by pro-Palestinian protesters during this year's

race, the organisers of La Vuelta decided to shorten the route to 12.2km instead of the scheduled 27.2km.

"Obviously, with the news of the change in the parcours last night it was a bit strange, but I tried to do all the best today," Ganna said.

"I hope it's enough, we cross the fingers. If someone was stronger than me, I will just say 'chapeau'."

Nobody was stronger, though Australian Jay Vine (UAE Team Emirates-XRG) came close, finishing one second off the Italian to take second place, with his teammate Almeida a further seven seconds behind, and now 40 seconds off Vingegaard.



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