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In this file photo Japanese puzzle manufacturer Maki Kaji poses for a picture during the first Sudoku national competition in Sao Paulo. — AFP

Japan's 'father of Sudoku' dead at 69

The man dubbed the "father of Sudoku" for his role in popularizing the numerical brainteaser loved by millions, has died of cancer at 69, his Japanese publisher has announced. In a notice posted Monday, Nikoli said Maki Kaji died at home on August 10 after battling cancer, and a memorial service would be held at a later date. "Mr Kaji was known as the father of Sudoku and was loved by puzzle fans all around the world," the publisher said in a statement on its website. Sudoku, a sort of numeri-

cal crossword, was invented by Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler in the 18th century.

The modern version is sometimes said to have been formulated in the United States, but Kaji is credited with having popularized the puzzle. He is also said to have come up with the name Sudoku, a contraction of a Japanese phrase meaning "each number must be single". Sudoku requires a player to put the numbers one to nine in a box made up of 81 squares, so that no number is repeated in

any of the nine vertical or horizontal lines. To complicate matters further, the grid is also sub-divided into nine blocks containing nine single squares, and each block must also contain the numbers one to nine. Despite its Japanese name, the original concept of Latin Squares—a grid in which every number or symbol occurs once in each row—was dreamt up in the 18th century by Euler.

Nikoli spotted a version in an American magazine in the 1980s and brought it to Japan, where Sudoku was born. It broke

into Europe and the United States several decades later, with Britain's BBC in 2005 writing about the puzzle that "began its gentle attack on the nation last year, and can now be found in four national newspapers". Kaji told the BBC in 2007 that creating a new puzzle was like "finding treasure". "It's not about whether it will make money. It is purely the excitement of trying to solve it." — AFP

Bob Dylan sued for allegedly sexually abusing girl in 1965

Bob Dylan has been sued in a New York court by a woman who says the US rock and folk legend sexually abused her almost 60 years ago when she was 12. The lawsuit filed Friday alleges that Dylan abused the plaintiff, referred to in court documents as J.C., over a six-week period between April and May 1965. It says Dylan "exploited his status as a musician to provide J.C. with alcohol and drugs and sexually abuse her multiple times." The suit also accused Dylan, who turned 80 in May, of physically threatening the girl. The alleged abuse took place at the apartment Dylan owned in New York's famous Chelsea Hotel, according to the lawsuit.



In this file photo US legend Bob Dylan performs on stage during the 21st edition of the Vieilles Charrues music festival in Carhaix-Plouguer, western France. — AFP

A spokesperson for Dylan, whose real name is Robert Zimmerman, said "the 56-year-old claim is untrue and will be vigorously defended." The accuser, who now lives in Greenwich, Connecticut, says Dylan caused her "severe psychological damage and emotional trauma." She is seeking unspecified damages. The lawsuit was filed a day before the window for filing claims under New York State's Child Victims Act closed. The act allowed victims of abuse to sue their alleged attackers irrespective of the age of the claims or whether the statute of limitations had passed. Last week, an accuser of late US financier Jeffrey Epstein used the act to sue Queen Elizabeth II's second son, Prince Andrew, for alleged sexual abuse.

Dylan is widely considered to be the greatest singer-songwriter of all time. His most notable works include "Blowin' In The Wind," "The Times They Are a-Changin'," and "Like A Rolling Stone." He burst onto the folk scene in New York in the early 1960s and has sold more than 125 million records around the world. In 2016, Dylan won the Nobel Prize for Literature "for having created new poetic expressions within the great American song tradition." Last year he released his 39th studio album, "Rough and Rowdy Ways," 58 years after the release of his first. — AFP

Madonna partners with Warner Music for career-spanning reissue campaign

Madonna's new partnership with Warner Music Group will see her entire catalogue reissued over the next few years. The 63-year-old pop icon is set to celebrate her 40th year in the recording industry in 2022 and she is now poised to personally curate deluxe editions for many of her landmark albums as part of the agreement with Warner. Madonna - who released her debut single with Warner in 1982 - said: "Since the very beginning, Warner Music Group has



'Free Guy' takes top spot at North American box office

The video game action comedy "Free Guy" has topped the North American box office in its opening weekend, taking in \$28.4 million, preliminary figures from trade firm Exhibitor Relations showed Sunday. The film, which lightheartedly explores the boundary between the virtual and the real, features an anti-hero played by Ryan Reynolds, a man who realizes he is a character in a video game and seeks to take control of his destiny. "This is a very good opening under difficult conditions. The Delta variant is taking a toll," David A. Gross, who runs consulting firm Franchise

Entertainment Research, told AFP, referring to a surge in coronavirus cases.

The horror feature "Don't Breathe 2," about a game of mass murder perpetuated by a blind veteran, came in second place with \$10.6 million in its first weekend. In third place was Disney's family adventure film "Jungle Cruise," based on a theme park ride, with \$9 million for the Friday-Sunday period. Right behind it, the biopic about soul queen Aretha Franklin, "Respect" came in fourth with \$8.8 million, and rounding out the top five was the supervillain movie "The Suicide Squad," which amassed \$7.8 million. Here are the rest of the top 5:

- "Old" (\$2.4 million)
- "Black Widow" (\$2 million)
- "Stillwater" (\$1.3 million)
- "The Green Knight" (\$1.2 million)
- "Space Jam: A New Legacy" (\$1.2 million) — AFP

sonal items, across the US we teetered along for two months. At times I was scared. I was lonely. I felt abandoned and unsupported. I had long bouts of depression and doubt and self-pity. But those backroads that took me to desert campsites and Walmart parking lots and rest stops and friends and family to New York and back began to help me see why I had chosen to leave the security of the Hollywood Hills where I fought for my life and mobility.

"All that time spent reclaiming my body, I now needed to be equally devoted to strengthening my emotional and mental health. Having that understanding helped me frame what I need from the rest of this sabbatical: getting a van and exploring this country while seeking out communities that support the process of growing from trauma. For me, this includes retreat centers, trauma programs, queer healers, creatives and spiritual leaders. And I can't wait to honestly share in the process and heal with you all along for the ride through writings, discussions and quirky videos (and maybe an interpretive dance or two). "So here I am, two months down on a 6 month journey. And, on this Feast of Saint

'Kite Runner' author says Afghans are 'right to be scared'

Afghan-American novelist Khaled Hosseini yesterday said that Afghans were justified to fear the return of the Taliban, with memories still fresh of the brutality of their last time in power. The 56-year-old best-selling author was born in Kabul and fled with his family to the United States in 1980 after the Soviet invasion. "Afghans know the Taliban... They remember what happened the last time they were here and they are right to be scared," Hosseini told BBC radio, stressing the headline Islamists' "excesses" and "draconian restrictions".

He has written a series of bestselling novels that feature Afghan settings, including "The Kite Runner" (2003) and its follow-up "A Thousand Splendid Suns" (2007). Hosseini said he had spoken to relatives in the western city of Herat, who "described to me the sounds of gunshots and fighting going on" and seeing Taliban flags appear. "Now they're home, they're anxious, they're worried, they're scared, like millions of other Afghans," he said. "I don't believe the Taliban to be representative of the Afghan will whatsoever," the author stressed, pointing to desperate scenes at Kabul airport as thousands attempted to flee. Afghans "face the very unenviable reality that they live under a regime that proved to be extremely brutal when they were in charge in the 1990s," he said.



Khaled Hosseini

The writer runs a foundation providing humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. In a statement on its website, he said he was "gravely concerned for the country," fearing a "humanitarian crisis". He urged the US and the international community to pressure the Taliban not to "enforce violence punitively on the Afghan citizens" and to respect human rights, "particularly those of women and girls". On Monday Hosseini tweeted urging Washington and its partners to accept refugees from Afghanistan like at the end of the Vietnam War, when some 130,000 from South Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia moved to the US. "The United States has a moral obligation. Admit as many Afghan refugees as possible," the author wrote. Hosseini told the BBC he had voted for US President Joe Biden, but castigated his speech on Monday for its lack of a "statement of empathy" with the Afghans left behind. "The other thing I didn't hear at least clearly from the president is what is the legacy of the last 20 years?," he said. "What was all this for?" — AFP

Gaga's dog walker crowdfunding for new van amid US road trip

Lady Gaga's dog walker is on a road trip across the US to heal emotional wounds after being shot this year - and he is crowdfunding for money for a new van. Ryan Fischer - who was shot four times in the chest while walking the pop star's pet pooches Koji, Miss Asia and Gustavo in West Hollywood in February - has set up a GoFundMe page to try to raise cash for a new vehicle so he can continue his six-month sabbatical, which is two months in, across America. He wrote on the page: "A few days ago, I said goodbye to Trudy, a quasi-reliable 1991 Ford Falcon rental that drove like a boat in high wind. With just me, Trudy, 3 stuffed animals that resemble dogs I care for very much, and WAY too many per-



Lady Gaga and Ryan Fischer

helped bring my music and vision to all my fans around the world with the utmost care and consideration. "They have been amazing partners, and I am delighted to be embarking on this next chapter with them to celebrate my catalogue from the last 40 years." The new partnership will include Madonna's entire Sire/Maverick/Warner catalogue, which includes some of her best-known work such as 'Like a Virgin' and 'Like a Prayer', as well as some of her more recent albums, such as 'MDNA' and 'Rebel Heart'.

Guy Oseary, Madonna's long-time manager, helped to seal the landmark deal and has promised to bring "new life" to her records. He explained: "Over the past 30 years, I've been fortunate enough to meet and spend time with many of Madonna's incredible fans, and this new partnership will bring to fruition what so many of them have been patiently waiting

for: a celebration of her ground-breaking catalogue. "My partner Sara Zambreno and I are working closely with Warner Music Group to bring new life to these iconic works." Max Lousada, the CEO of Recorded Music at Warner Music Group, hailed Madonna as an "incomparable superstar".

He added: "Madonna has changed the course of pop and dance music, while taking live performance to new heights of drama and invention. At the same time, she uses her fame to amplify some of the most important social issues and movements of our time. "Constantly and fearlessly challenging convention, her four decades of music are not only an extraordinary body of work, but a playbook for creative and cultural evolution." — Bang Showbiz

Rocque, I have a clear purpose but am at an obvious impasse. With no vehicle, apartment, and having run out of savings and surviving on donations from generous loved ones, I am humbly asking for your help. This is not an easy thing to ask, but I have started to realize sharing your vulnerability with others is exactly when radical change begins to occur for everyone involved. (sic) At the time of writing, Ryan has raised more than \$3,300 of a \$40,000 target.

He is also keen to hear about "retreats for trauma" in the US. Ryan added: "I have set up this GoFundMe page in supporting a van purchase, travel expenses and welcome all input on retreats for trauma throughout the country as well as queer spiritual leaders and healers, and how best to highlight and share with you along the way. I love you, and thank you for all the ways you have supported me throughout; I truly can't wait to see how the next step of this journey unfolds for us all. (sic) During the dognap, Miss Asia ran away from the scene while Koji and Gustavo were captured by the robbers. Miss Asia was later recovered and returned the same day, before Koji and Gustavo were found two days after the shooting. In May, Ryan said healing "hadn't been easy to navigate" after he was shot by thieves when walking the pop star's pets. In a candid Instagram post, he wrote: "It's a strange thing to be known for a trauma that I'm still healing from. People want to reach out, share in my pain for a moment, and then walk away, leaving me to relive it again. It's not intentional; it comes from a kindness and compassion that I welcome. — Bang Showbiz



Prince Harry 'had sense of humor' about 'The Prince'

Prince Harry "had a sense of humor" about HBO Max's "The Prince". The animated comedy pokes fun at the British Royal Family, particularly Harry's eight-year-old nephew Prince George, but creator Gary Janetti has claimed Harry was not concerned about the show, which features his good friend Orlando Bloom as the voice of Harry, 36. Gary told Andy Cohen on "Watch What Happens Live": "I don't know if Harry has said anything to Orlando about it, but I know before the show premiered, he was aware that Orlando was doing it. And he seemed to have a sense of humor about it."

Although the show has received criticism for mocking children, including Prince George, his sister Princess Charlotte, six and brother Prince Louis, three, Orlando previously claimed it was not malicious. He said: "It's not malicious or intended to be. "Actually, Katy [Perry, Orlando's fiancée] saw one bit of it and was like, 'You've got to do this. This is genius'. And the animation is done by some of the guys who did Family Guy, so it's going to be very amusing. And who doesn't love the Royal Family?" Alan Cumming, who voices Prince George's butler, also defended the show, which has been panned by critics. He said: "I don't know [if the Royal Family would like it]. If they appreciate satire, they might... It's quite tender, actually - my character with George, it's a really lovely relationship. It's not as mean as people think." — Bang Showbiz

