

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Binyamin Netanyahu vowed to retaliate after Israeli authorities reported that a missile launched by the **Houthi** rebel group in Yemen landed near Ben Gurion airport, pausing flights briefly. “It will not happen in one bang,” said Israel’s prime minister, “but there will be many bangs.” The Iranian-backed **Houthis** have been firing missiles at Israel since the outbreak of the conflict in Gaza, but they rarely get past the country’s anti-missile systems.

Kato Katsunobu, **Japan’s** finance minister, said his country had no plans to use the possibility of selling **American Treasury bonds** as a negotiating chip in discussions with the Trump administration about tariffs. On Friday Mr Kato had said in an interview that Japan could do so. The country holds over \$1trn of **American debt**, more than any other country.

An overnight Russian drone strike on Kyiv, **Ukraine’s** capital, killed at least 11 people, including two children, according to local officials. On Monday Russia announced a three-day ceasefire, starting on May 8th. **Ukraine** says it will not respect the truce. Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy chairman of Russia’s Security Council, said on Saturday that Kyiv may not survive if Ukraine attacked Russia during that period.

**Brazilian** police arrested two people in connection with a plan to bomb a Lady Gaga concert attended by more than 2m people on Saturday in Rio de Janeiro. Authorities say the pair were recruiting people, including minors, online to attack the pop gig with improvised explosives. The alleged leader was arrested on gun charges while a teenager was detained for possession of child pornography.

**Singaporeans** handed Lawrence Wong's People's Action Party a comfortable general-election win. The party, which has enjoyed uninterrupted rule for 66 years, won 87 out of 97 seats in parliament. The outcome surprised many observers who thought the governing party was losing ground to the opposition. But the prime minister's pitch of dependability during the trade war—for a city-state whose trade-to-GDP ratio tops 300%—resonated with voters.

The Rapid Support Forces carried out a drone attack on a military base near Port **Sudan**, according to the government's Sudanese Armed Forces. It is the first time that the paramilitary group has struck the eastern port town, where the government is based, during Sudan's two-year civil war. In March the SAF drove the RSF out of [Khartoum, the capital](#).

Residents of Boca Chica Village in Texas overwhelmingly backed [Elon Musk's](#) idea to turn the place into a new city called **Starbase**. The 283 Boca Chicans—the vast majority of whom are employed by Mr Musk's rocket firm, SpaceX—voted to incorporate the 3.8-square kilometres of land as a municipality, giving it powers to collect tax, among other things.

**Word of the week:** econometrics, what Mark Carney said he'll govern Canada in during his final campaign speech. [Read the full story](#).

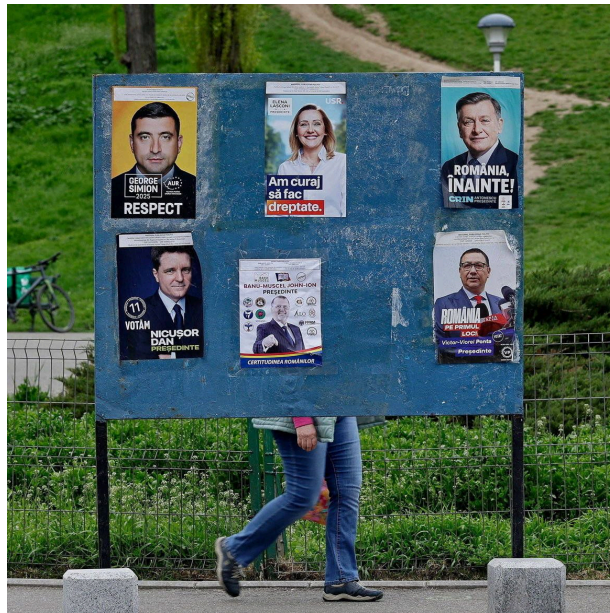


Photograph: Getty Images

## America's trillion-dollar piggy bank

This weekend is the deadline set by Donald Trump for Scott Bessent, America's treasury secretary, to sketch out plans for a sovereign wealth fund. The rough idea, says Mr Bessent, is to “monetise the asset side of the balance-sheet”. At their best, such independently managed but state-directed funds funnel a government's surpluses into productive investments—long-term bets on critical industries, for example—or help commodity-rich economies put aside money and diversify.

Never mind, then, that America has \$29trn in debt, a widening fiscal deficit and no resource windfall to diversify away from. Using state resources to buy risky assets may spook bond markets, already twitchy about tariffs, or [force hard fiscal choices](#) when asset prices slide. Sure, patient capital for critical minerals might prove useful. But sovereign funds succeed only when they are shielded from political meddling. Any firewall put up by the Trump administration—which has interfered with institutions from universities to the Federal Reserve—may prove dangerously thin.



Photograph: EPA

## Romania votes—again

Last December Romania's constitutional court annulled the [country's presidential election](#) after Calin Georgescu, a hard-right populist, unexpectedly won the first round—allegedly thanks to Russian campaign interference. On Sunday the vote was repeated. But this time Mr Georgescu was banned from running.

Exit polls suggest that George Simion of the Alliance for the Unity of Romanians, another hard-right populist party, came first with over 30% of the vote. Less clear was whether Crin Antonescu of the National Liberals or Nicușor Dan, the independent mayor of Bucharest, came second. Mr Dan is widely respected for fighting corruption, but Mr Antonescu has a powerful nationwide network behind him.

Mr Simion is backed by many anti-establishment voters, especially those angered by Mr Georgescu's disqualification. His views, which are both nationalist and Russia-friendly, worry EU officials. He has threatened to block arms shipments to Ukraine, and wants his country to absorb neighbouring Moldova. The top two finishers will face off in a second round on May 18th.





Photograph: Every Second Media

## Formula One races for America

Since it bought Formula One in 2017 Liberty Media, an American company, has been encouraging Americans to [tune into car racing](#). Its Netflix docu-drama, “Drive to Survive”, has been a roaring success. It added two more races in America to the annual competitions calendar and persuaded F1’s established teams to admit an American one, Cadillac, into the competition from 2026.

There is plenty of scope to grow further. ESPN pays around \$3.8m to broadcast each of F1’s 24 races to its American viewers. By contrast, broadcasters pay the National Football League more than \$40m for each of its 272 games in a season. Liberty Media will learn more about how F1 is faring in America from the Miami Grand Prix this weekend. Last year’s race set a record for American viewership. Thanks to an especially exciting duel to win the 2025 F1 championship, this year’s race in Miami could set another.





Photograph: Getty Images

## Beating the deepfakers

Detecting [deepfakes](#) has become harder as the AI technology used to create them improves. Five years ago strange-looking earlobes were the giveaway. No longer. Two years ago generative AI struggled to accurately depict fingers. Now even a heartbeat may not be a vital sign of humanity. Deepfake videos using face-swapping technology can copy the faint colour flicker skin shows each time the heart beats, researchers at the Humboldt University of Berlin have found.

The academics checked more than 850 deepfaked videos against medical-grade heart recordings, finding the deepfakes' pulse was within two beats per minute of the original footage it was based on. That makes it trickier, but not impossible, to identify fakes.

Looking at how faces flush with colour is the next-best determinant of fakery, the researchers say. Real faces show a natural heartbeat pattern that changes across the cheeks, forehead and nose.

Deepfakes reproduce the timing of the beat, but the colour pulses' pattern is often slightly wrong.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Women's road-cycling picks up the pace

Staging road races is an expensive business. And funding from major sponsors and broadcasters, especially for women's competitions, has been hard to come by. Although the men's [Tour de France](#) has been a world-famous competition for decades, the first multi-stage Tour de France Femmes was held as recently as 2022.

Female riders are slowly catching up. The organisers of the Giro d'Italia have committed to running a women's event for the next four years. The third edition of Spain's Vuelta Femenina, a seven-stage race, begins on Sunday in Barcelona. The sport's best-known rider, Demi Vollering of the Netherlands, was reportedly offered €1m (\$1.1m) to race for ADQ, an Emirati team. (She eventually signed a smaller deal with a different outfit.) More money at the top could filter down the peloton. But that may take a while: the Cyclists' Alliance, which represents female riders, found in 2023 that a quarter of competitors in professional races remained unpaid.





Illustration: The Economist

## Mini crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

### Cryptic clues

- 1 across Old kingdom revolution back in Asia is replicable (6)
- 2 across Sun article featuring a very hot room (5)
- 3 across A nation unknown and initially a mighty but inconsistent ally (6)
- 1 down Czar's hope: end disruptive Spanish politician (5,7)

### Factual clues

*1 across* What had Persepolis as its capital in pre-Islamic times (6)

*2 across* Site for “sweat-bathing” (5)

*3 across* An African country with few fuel alternatives to charcoal (5)

*1 down* Leader facing a backlash after a blackout (5,7)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week’s edition.

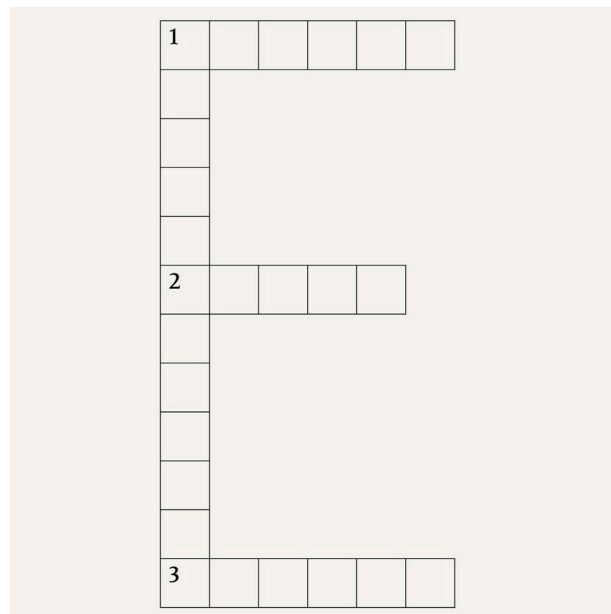


Image: The Economist



Illustration: The Economist

## The winners of this week's quiz

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Patrick Banham**, Black Creek, Canada

**Tracey Zellman**, Concord, Massachusetts, United States

**Susan Narlock de Madiedo**, Hirschaid, Germany

They all gave the correct answers of meta, alphabet, the Amazon basin, Apple Corps and Nikola Tesla. The theme is the “magnificent seven” stocks that dominate the US stockmarket: Meta, Alphabet, Amazon, Apple and Tesla

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which prefix is used to mean both “cleverly self-referential” and “occurring later than”?

**Tuesday:** What well-known word is formed from the first two Greek letters?

**Wednesday:** Which geographical area, around 7m square kilometres in area, is bounded by the Atlantic ocean to the east and

the Andes mountains to the west?

**Thursday:** Which company was founded in 1968 by the Beatles to manage their business interests?

**Friday:** Which Serbian-American inventor was a pioneer of the alternating current electricity system?

*Success is like reaching an  
important birthday and finding  
you're exactly the same.*

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***Audrey Hepburn***