

Catch up: Biden drops out; Bangladesh scraps controversial quotas



President Joe Biden announced that he would [abandon his bid to be re-elected](#) in November. In a written statement, Mr Biden said he believed “it is in the best interest of my party and my country for me to stand down” as the Democratic Party’s presidential nominee. His announcement follows weeks of sustained pressure and calls from senior Democrats for him to cede his party’s nomination to a younger candidate. Mr Biden lent his “full support and endorsement” to Kamala Harris, his vice-president, as his replacement as nominee and called on his party to “come together and beat Trump”.

Bangladesh’s Supreme Court scrapped most of the quotas that reserved government jobs for family members of veterans who fought in the country’s 1971 war of independence. The scheme is extremely controversial; in recent days, it sparked student-led protests that plunged Bangladesh into chaos and left at least 100 people dead. The demonstrations are the biggest since Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh’s prime minister, [won a fifth term](#) earlier this year.

Ukrainian troops in Donetsk, an eastern region, withdrew from the village of Prohres to avoid being trapped by Russian forces. The pull-back was reported by DeepState, an open-source intelligence outfit. In recent days Ukrainian troops also gave up Krynky, a village on the east bank of the Dnipro river, amid heavy losses. But although Russia has plenty of manpower, its stocks of Soviet-era weaponry [may be running out](#).

Nippon Steel said it had hired Mike Pompeo, a former secretary of state under Donald Trump, to help lobby for its [acquisition of US Steel](#). The deal is opposed by both [Joe Biden](#), America's president, and Mr Trump, his Republican opponent. Nippon said that Mr Pompeo—who also previously led the Central Intelligence Agency—would help to convey the firm's view that the deal could bolster America's "economic and national security".

Israel said that it carried out an air strike on military targets in and around the Al Hudaydah Port in Yemen. The strikes were directed at the Houthis, an [Iran-backed militia](#) that previously claimed responsibility for a drone strike which killed one person and injured as many as ten others in Tel Aviv on Friday. Israel's army said the strikes had been carried out in response to "hundreds of attacks" by the Houthis on Israel in recent months.

Microsoft said around 8.5m computers were disabled in a global **IT outage** on Friday. Though the number represents less than 1% of the machines running Microsoft's operating system, many of the affected devices were used for critical services, the firm said. The disruption was caused by a corrupted software update sent out by CrowdStrike, a cybersecurity firm. IT experts say businesses could take weeks to recover.

HDFC Bank, India's largest private-sector bank, posted strong financial results for the most recent quarter. The firm's net income rose by 35% to 161.7bn rupees (\$1.9bn) from March 31st to June 30th compared to the same period one year ago. The bank's

performance—which many analysts view as an indicator for the health of [India's finance sector](#)—was boosted by growth in both loans and deposits.

Word of the Week: *Hengst*, an Old Germanic word for “stallion”.
[Read the full story.](#)

In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.

Bibi goes to Washington



The backdrop to Binyamin Netanyahu's first overseas visit since the war in [Gaza](#) began is sombre. On Friday Tel Aviv came under attack from Houthi drones. Israel retaliated by bombing Yemen on Saturday, and is still on the brink of all-out war with Hizbullah in Lebanon. Israel's prime minister had been due to set off to America on Sunday. Relatives of the 120 hostages still held in Gaza have criticised him for leaving when Israel may be on the cusp of a ceasefire deal with Hamas. Now his trip has been delayed. Mr Netanyahu had been due to meet President Joe Biden, who is down with a case of covid-19, on Monday. That meeting has been moved to Wednesday, probably as a result of Mr Biden's illness.

But Mr Netanyahu's main interest is in Congress, where he will address a joint session on Wednesday. He is discredited at home and distrusted abroad. But Mr Netanyahu believes that he can convince those calling for a ceasefire in Gaza that Israel is fighting a wider war against Iran and its proxies. He will argue that Israel must be given more time and support to see things through.

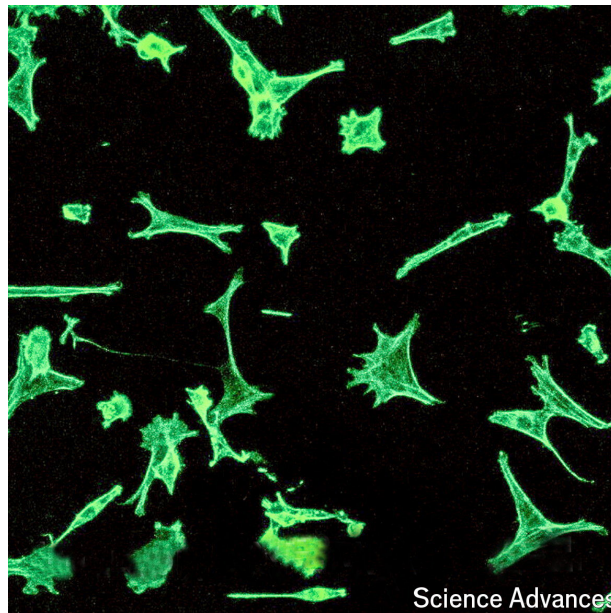
Protests rock Bangladesh



On Sunday students across [Bangladesh](#) were due to take high-school exams. Those have now been postponed indefinitely. The students' reprieve, however, is laced with tragedy. Bangladesh is roiled by protests, which have killed at least 100 people this week. In response, the government has imposed a curfew and deployed the army.

The demonstrations were triggered by a court's decision last month to reinstate a controversial affirmative-action policy that had been scrapped in 2018. It reserved 30% of government jobs for families of those who died fighting for Bangladesh's independence in 1971, and other minorities. The Supreme Court was due to deliver a final verdict on the quota on August 7th, but that trial was brought forward to Sunday amid the growing violence. In the end the judges ruled in favour of Bangladesh's protesters. That means that government jobs will remain more accessible, but the ruling will do little to alleviate the deeper problem of youth unemployment. Around 40% of 15-24 year olds are neither in education nor employed, nearly double the global percentage.

Electric eels inspire jelly batteries



What is flexible, self-healing and 60% water? Among the right answers are the human body and hydrogels. That similarity makes hydrogels useful in bioelectronics, according to research newly reported in *Science Advances*, a journal. Researchers at the University of Cambridge have used hydrogels to make “jelly batteries”. With their stretchable coloured cells, the batteries resemble confectionary snakes. But they were in fact inspired by electric eels: the batteries use ions to carry charge through layered cells, generating a current. They can stretch to more than ten times their original length while maintaining the same levels of conductivity.

These capabilities mean that the batteries could be implanted into the brains of people with epilepsy, or elsewhere in the body to power [wearable diagnostic devices](#). Since the dawn of electronics engineers have been using metallic materials as the basis for their inventions. But it seems that following nature’s softer, squishier path can provide benefits.

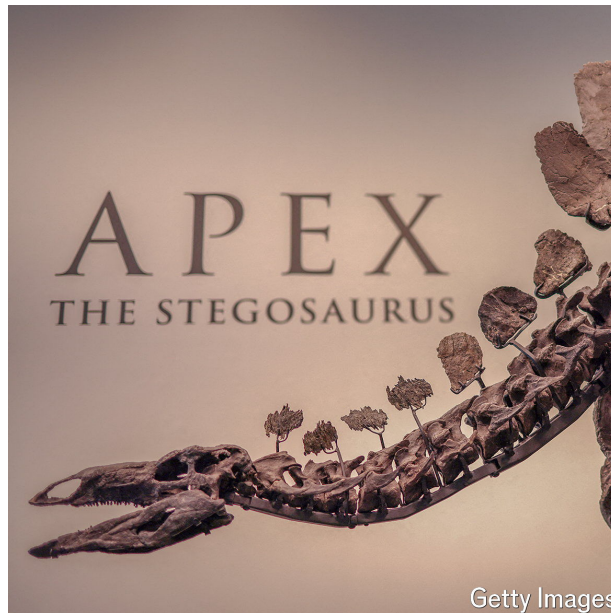
Pogacar dominated the Tour de France



This year's [Tour de France](#) should have been thrilling. There was fierce competition for the top spot: Tadej Pogacar, a Slovenian cyclist, and Jonas Vingegaard, a Danish one, have each won two of the past four Tours. Remco Evenepoel, a talented Belgian, was making his Tour debut. Mark Cavendish, a Brit, was looking to clinch a record 35th stage win; Biniam Girmay was seeking to become the first black African cyclist to win a stage. (Both were successful.)

But after the riders roll into Nice on Sunday, the race will be remembered as one that never quite caught fire. This is largely down to Mr Pogacar, who dominated throughout: even with a comfortable lead he attacked his opponents to gain an additional second or two. In 2022 and 2023 his relentlessness cost him in the final stages as he began to lose steam. But in 2024 Mr Pogacar played the Tour to perfection.

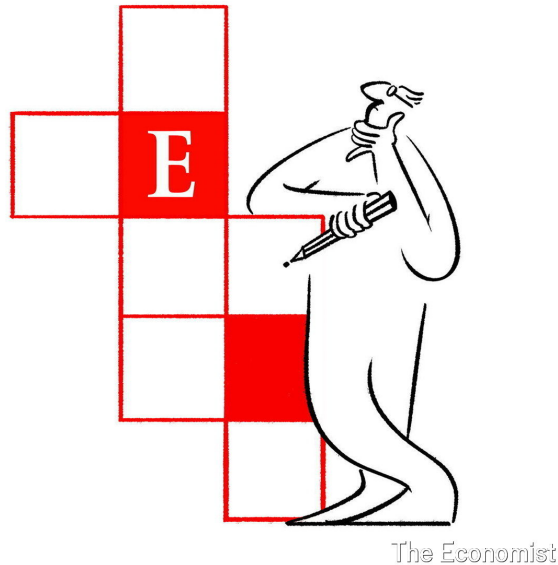
A staggering stegosaurus sale



The great auction houses of Europe and America have long sold Old Master paintings. Today they also market dinosaur fossils. This week the largest stegosaurus ever found sold at Sotheby's in New York for \$44.6m—a record for a fossil. “Apex”, the 150m-year-old dinosaur, was bought by Ken Griffin, the boss of Citadel, an investment firm.

Scientists fear the fossil has been lost to the public. That may not be the case. Mr Griffin reportedly intends to put it on display at a museum. “Apex was born in America and is going to stay in America,” he said. (In 2022 he loaned a copy of the constitution worth \$40m to the Crystal Bridges Museum in Arkansas.) Cretaceous capitalism has other upsides, too. A legitimate market helps curb smuggling and dodgy sales. [Privatised fossil-hunting](#) may lead to even more impressive discoveries. That is better than leaving fossils in the ground, or allowing smugglers to unearth them.

Weekly crossword



Our crossword is designed for experienced cruciverbalists and newcomers alike. Both sets of clues give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

Email all four answers by 9am GMT on Monday to crossword@economist.com, along with your home city and country. We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

Cryptic clues

1 down Designing buildings to have curved structure—one with pronounced tactile quality (12)

1 across Portion of lamb an insult for mega-rich family (6)

2 across Sat back to embrace former lover in a state (5)

3 across Mass migration featured in the bible (6)

Factual clues

1 down Of which modernism is an increasingly unpopular style—for people and penguins alike

1 across A dynasty known for throwing incredibly lavish weddings

2 *across* Where Ted Cruz is a senator

3 *across* What some are expecting from Hong Kong because of its new national-security legislation

Winner's of this week's quiz



The Economist

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

Mike Carter, San Diego, CA, United States

Peter Lynch, Santiago, Chile

Ailsa Green, Choma, Zambia

They all gave the correct answers of The Cherry Orchard, Zero Dark Thirty, vanilla, classics and diets. The theme is that they are all, or have been, types of Coke: cherry, zero, vanilla, classic and diet

Hengst

*An Old Germanic word for “stallion”.
Read the full story.*

Love is like a friendship caught on fire.

Bruce Lee