

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

European leaders denounced Donald Trump's threat to impose escalating tariffs on eight European countries that have opposed his bid to [purchase Greenland](#). Emmanuel Macron, France's president, condemned the "intimidation"; Sir Keir Starmer, Britain's prime minister, called it "completely wrong". America's president announced a 10% levy on all goods starting on February 1st which will rise to 25% on June 1st, lasting until a deal is reached.

Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, accused America and Israel of orchestrating unrest across the country, as he acknowledged the high death toll following nationwide protests. More than 3,000 people have died in **Iran**'s deadliest [unrest](#) in decades, according to Human Rights Activists in Iran, an advocacy group. Mr Khamenei said Mr Trump was responsible for "deaths, damage, and accusations he has inflicted on the Iranian people".

Syria's army advanced quickly to the east of Aleppo, in the country's north, taking towns held by [the Syrian Democratic Forces](#), a Kurdish-led coalition of ethnic militias. Last week clashes broke out in Aleppo between the sides, forcing tens of thousands to flee. On Friday Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's president, formally

recognised Kurdish as a “national language” and restored citizenship to Kurdish Syrians.

Uganda’s veteran president, Yoweri Museveni, secured a seventh term in office with more than 71% of the vote, despite vocal claims of electoral malpractice. The defeated opposition leader Bobi Wine rejected the results, after escaping a military and police raid on his home. He said his wife and family members remain under house arrest. Mr Museveni has been in power for four decades.

Micron Technology, an American maker of memory chips, agreed to buy a fabrication site in Taiwan for \$1.8bn as part of its bid to ramp up semiconductor production. The deal is expected to close by the second quarter of 2026 and will need to meet regulatory approval. The announcement followed a ceremony for Micron’s new plant outside Syracuse, New York.

Tensions rose further in **Minneapolis**. Protesters against a surge in Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents chased off a group of far-right demonstrators who had planned to march on a neighbourhood popular with immigrants on Sunday. On Friday a judge restricted agents’ actions towards protesters, for example using pepper spray. The city has been gripped by demonstrations since an ICE officer killed [Renee Good](#) on January 7th.

NASA transported to its launch pad the rocket that will carry the first human crew to the Moon in more than 50 years. Four astronauts will fly around the Moon and return to Earth in a ten-day flight known as the [Artemis II mission](#). The launch is not expected to take place until February 6th at the earliest.

Word of the week: Frottage. Something female snow monkeys enjoy doing. [Read the full story](#).

In which year did American forces snatch another Latin American dictator, Manuel Noriega of Panama? Test your knowledge with

our latest history quiz.



Photograph: AP

Cuba's regime is in dire straits

Since [kidnapping Nicolás Maduro](#), Venezuela's dictator, Donald Trump has repeatedly said that [Cuba is next](#). Though America's intentions are murky, it is obvious that Cuba's regime is now unusually vulnerable.

It has survived for decades because powerful friends like the Soviet Union have propped up its state-controlled economy. Since the 2000s Venezuela has been its most important ally, supplying discounted oil in exchange for Cuban doctors and security personnel. With America's operation to remove Mr Maduro, that has gone. Mexico has long supported Cuba, but financial and political pressures mean it is unlikely to do more. [Other friends are holding back](#).

Yet many within the regime's elite remain true believers, even as it has become clear that their ideology [has failed](#). Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, has vowed to resist American aggression "until the last drop of blood". Mr Trump is hard to predict. But the more he threatens Cuba, the harder it will be for him to back down.



Photograph: OFC Media via Phototek

A Pacific model for football leagues

The Oceania Football Confederation Pro League, the region's first professional league, kicked off on Saturday in Auckland, New Zealand. Until now, Oceania was the only one of the world's six men's-football confederations to lack a professional league. Eight teams from seven nations and territories will compete. Vanuatu United and Bula of Fiji played the opening match. Five rounds of matches will be held across the region. The semi-finals and final will take place in Auckland in May.

The new league, which has the approval of [FIFA](#), football's global governing body, could become a blueprint for other leagues in small markets. Some, notably in Belgium and the Netherlands, have discussed combining their leagues to boost broadcasting revenue. On a grander scale, the [European Super League](#), a proposed tournament for the continent's big clubs, had the same goal, but collapsed days after being announced in 2021. If Oceania fares better, clubs elsewhere may join forces, too.



Photograph: Alamy

The mosquitoes are biting back

Mosquitoes have long supped on human blood, but in areas of declining biodiversity they are doing so more often, according to a new study published in *Frontiers in Ecology and Evolution*. Scientists in Brazil captured 1,714 mosquitoes in the Atlantic Forest, a broadleaf forest that has lost two-thirds of its area and many of its animals. Among those that had recently feasted the researchers identified blood from 18 humans, six birds, one amphibian, a canid and a mouse.

Mosquitoes' growing taste for human blood, the authors argue, is a response to biodiversity loss: there are fewer alternative food sources. This shift may increase the spread of [mosquito-borne viral diseases](#) such as yellow fever. A better understanding of their foraging behaviour may help [disease-prevention strategies](#). But until then, humans staying near recently felled forests had better slather on bug repellent.



Photograph: Bill Cunningham/The New York Times/Redux/eyevine

How well do you know your spouse?

When someone decides to write a marriage memoir, it is rarely because they have enjoyed decades of bliss. Sometimes the author wants to exact literary revenge for infidelity; other times the memoir is a lament, an exploration of heartbreak.

“Strangers” falls in the second group. [Belle Burden’s memoir](#) expands on a widely read essay she wrote in 2023, which described the moment when her husband of 21 years announced that he wanted a divorce and that he did not want custody of their three children. He was having an affair. Ms Burden had no idea of it—and no inkling that he was unhappy in their marriage.

She describes her shock and grief, which were amplified by the isolation made necessary by the pandemic. “Strangers” describes not just the emotional fallout of her husband’s departure, but the financial implications, too. After reading Ms Burden’s story, you may wonder what your own spouse is capable of.



Photograph: Greg Kahn

Weekend profile: Reza Pahlavi, the shah's son rooting for revolution in Iran

For decades only diehard royalists took Reza Pahlavi seriously. [Iran's regime](#), its opponents and Western diplomats dismissed the son of the last shah as the “Clown Prince”. When protests began on December 28th he was said to be on a beach holiday.

For 47 years he has championed his claim to the throne, mixing with the powerful in Washington, DC (he lives nearby) but impressing few of them. An Iranian exile there describes Mr Pahlavi and his team as “rookies”. Donald Trump considers him “a nice man” but has brushed aside his requests to meet.

Now Mr Pahlavi believes his moment has arrived. Clean-shaven and besuited, Mr Pahlavi presents a stark contrast with Ali Khamenei, the bearded supreme leader in his robes and turban, who scorns ties as symbols of decadence. Like many a populist, Mr Pahlavi says that the people’s grievances give legitimacy to his claim. “This regime is on the verge of collapse. And what it’s doing right now is a last-gasp effort to intimidate,” [he told *The Economist*](#) in Washington this week.

Cries of “Javid Shah” (“Long live the king!”) were widespread at the protests that have consumed Tehran and Iran’s other cities in recent weeks. Iranians like mythical saviours. In 1979 Ruhollah Khomeini, an untested cleric, played that role. And few alternatives

remain. The regime has locked up any would-be challengers in Iran. It has filled its prisons with dissidents and their lawyers; political parties are prohibited.

After the regime mowed down the protesters, Mr Pahlavi called for a return to the streets. But he stumbles when asked what Iranians should do in the face of state violence. He stresses the importance of non-violence but argues that people have the right to defend themselves when attacked.

And what does he think should follow? You have to “eliminate the top corrupt brass”, but leave infrastructure in place so the country can function, he says. “The day the regime falls, somebody has to still pick up the trash.” His 169-page “Emergency Phase Booklet”, a plan for Iran published in July, seems to offer change while also trying to placate potential foes. It vows to seek national reconciliation, integrate the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps into the army and retain police and civil servants. It also warns against vengeance and purges. Yet it proposes vetting minor civil servants in important ministries for ideological and intelligence ties and repealing laws against homosexuality. Mr Pahlavi says he would establish diplomatic ties with Israel (his father never did) and abandon Iran’s nuclear programme for sanctions relief.

And yet Iran’s opposition movements remain wary of Mr Pahlavi. The country’s ethnic minorities remember his father’s suppression of their languages and heritage in the name of Persian grandeur. Mr Pahlavi has promised to put the restoration of a monarchy to a referendum. Many doubt that pledge.



Illustration: Sandra Navarro

The winners of the week's quiz

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

Dwight Huntington, Pennsylvania, America

Gabriela Jiménez, Mexico City, Mexico

Marco Gonçalves Dias, Geneva, Switzerland

They all gave the correct answers of: Papa Doc, The Lord's Prayer, Ray of Light, Virgin and Vogue. The theme is hits by Madonna: Papa Don't Preach, Like A Prayer, Ray of Light, Like a Virgin and Vogue.

The questions were:

Monday: François Duvalier, the dictator of Haiti from 1957 to 1971, was known by what nickname?

Tuesday: Which religious text begins “Our father, who art in heaven”?

Wednesday: What form of radiation has a wavelength between 400 and 700 nanometres?

Thursday: Richard Branson is associated with which brand name, which has been used in industries such as music, hotels and airlines?

Friday: Anna Wintour was the long-serving editor of which fashion magazine?

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

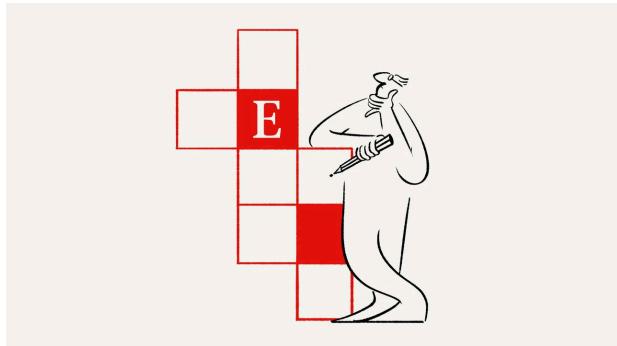


Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#).

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

Cryptic clues

1 across - Southern and pale, majestic in flight (4)

2 across - Jealousy as one of the Big Four traps a Western state (4)

3 across - Catch a metal spike (4)

1 down - Saint with a muddled namaste? He rules! (9)

Straight clues

1 across - Watch out, this bird could break your arm (4)

2 across - A deadly sin (4)

3 across - To get a baddie (4)

1 down - An experienced male leader (9)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We will pick three winners at random and crown them in Tuesday's edition.

Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.

Benjamin Franklin