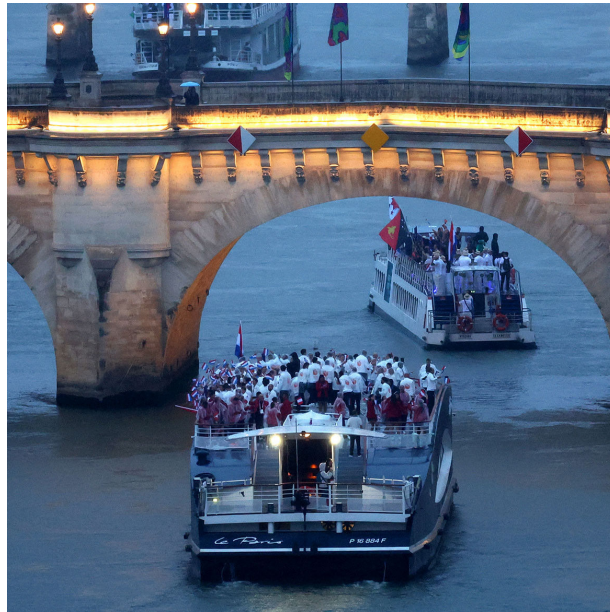


Catch up: Paris Olympics begin; Israeli strikes hit school



Competition for the first gold medals of the **Paris Olympics** got under way, after a star-studded, eclectic and rain-soaked opening ceremony along [the Seine](#) on Friday evening. Hours before the ceremony, France's high-speed rail network was hit by [a series of apparent arson attacks](#). Trains were suspended across most of the country after fires were lit on lines to the west, north and east of the capital. Who was behind the attacks remains unclear. Gabriel Attal, the prime minister, said the government had begun an investigation.

Israeli air strikes killed at least 30 Palestinians sheltering in a school in [Gaza](#), and injured over 100 more, according to Gaza's health ministry. The **Israel Defence Forces** said the attack targeted a Hamas command centre. Earlier, the IDF ordered civilians to evacuate some districts of Khan Younis, a city in southern Gaza, and to move to a "designated humanitarian area".

Anthony Blinken, America's secretary of state, criticised **China's** "escalating" and "unlawful actions" in the [South China Sea](#), shortly

after arriving in Laos, where he met with Wang Yi, the Chinese foreign minister. America's top diplomat will also travel to Vietnam, Japan and the Philippines. America wants to strengthen ties with Asian countries in the face of an increasingly assertive China.

Typhoon Gaemi hit north-eastern China, after causing destruction in the south-east of the country, as well as Taiwan and the Philippines. More than 27,000 residents were evacuated on Saturday, and hundreds of factories had to suspend operations. Gaemi is the third typhoon to hit China's east coast this year, and the most powerful. It killed at least 21 people in the Philippines.

Finance ministers and central-bank governors from the **G20** vowed to work together to [tax billionaires](#) at their meeting in **Brazil**. It was the group's first-ever joint declaration on international taxation. However, progress is unlikely. America is reluctant to endorse the idea. Janet Yellen, America's treasury secretary, said that the OECD would be a better forum to hold talks.

[Howard Schultz](#), a former boss of **Starbucks**, is opposing a potential deal between it and Elliot Management, an American activist hedge fund, reported the *Financial Times*. Mr Schultz remains the sixth-largest shareholder of the coffee giant, whose share price has dropped by around 20% this year. Companies under pressure from activists often negotiate settlements rather than get into public spats.

Warner Bros Discovery, a media company, sued the **National Basketball Association** for allegedly breaching their media-rights contract. The lawsuit argues that the sports league—which on Wednesday announced [a new deal](#) worth \$77bn with ESPN, NBC and Amazon—had violated their contract by refusing to honour Warner Bros' matching proposal. The NBA insists that the counter-offer fell short of the competitors' bid.

Word of the week: Brat, the title of Charli XCX's new album, which has spawned countless memes of Kamala Harris. [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.

Could Venezuelans boot out Maduro?



On Sunday Venezuelans vote in an election that could reshape the country. Nicolás Maduro, the autocrat who succeeded Hugo Chávez, a firebrand socialist who died in 2013, is far behind in the polls. One reason is his terrible economic record. GDP fell by a staggering 75% in the eight years to 2021. Corruption is rife. More than 7m Venezuelans have emigrated in the last decade, straining neighbouring countries and worsening the crisis at America's southern border.

In a free election Edmundo González, the main opposition candidate, would probably win. But the vote **may not be free**. The regime could disrupt voting on the day or announce a bogus victory. That would almost certainly precipitate protests. It may also test the army's loyalty to Mr Maduro, who has warned there could be a "bloodbath" if he loses. Still, a slender hope remains that negotiations could persuade Mr Maduro to edge aside. The stakes could not be higher.

Defence ties in the Indo-Pacific



America is firming up its Asian alliances ahead of its presidential election in November. On Sunday Antony Blinken, the secretary of state, and Lloyd Austin, the defence secretary, begin a series of “2+2” meetings with counterparts from Japan, the Philippines and Australia. Some American officials describe them as “the ten most consequential days” for President [Joe Biden’s defence policy](#) in the [Indo-Pacific](#).

In Tokyo on Sunday the ministers will outline plans for “a historic upgrade” to America’s military command-and-control. This may involve moving some activities involved in military operations from Hawaii. The aim is to support Japan’s own military build-up and liaise more closely with its new joint command combining air, naval, ground and other forces. Expect more robust cross-domain exercises, and American deployments in Japan’s south-western islands near Taiwan. There will also be new defence industrial deals to boost production of Patriot air-defence missiles (in short supply everywhere), and to repair warships and planes.

Bibi's turbulent summer



It was a [tempestuous trip to America](#) for Binyamin Netanyahu. In a bid to rally waning American support for his country's war in Gaza, the Israeli prime minister addressed Congress and met President Joe Biden and his potential successors, Kamala Harris and Donald Trump. As he returns to Israel on Sunday, he will be hoping for a bit of political calm.

Mr Netanyahu's return coincides with the final day of the summer session of the Knesset, after which Israel's parliament will begin a three-month recess. During this period, his opponents will not be able to bring a no-confidence or dissolution motion against him. But his government is not yet stable. After months of delay, Mr Netanyahu will need to decide within the coming weeks on whether to agree to a ceasefire with Hamas. That would secure the release of Israel's hostages in Gaza; even a temporary truce would mean losing his far-right partners in government. But refusing the deal may unleash even bigger protests.

Swimmingly for the French



Elite athletes are used to pressure. But few face that of being a gold-medal contender at a home [Olympics](#). Léon Marchand, a [swimmer](#) who is the poster boy for the [French team](#), will get that experience this weekend. He is the overwhelming favourite in the 400m individual medley, his best event.

Mr Marchand came sixth in the Olympic final in Tokyo, completing the race in four minutes and 11.16 seconds. But since 2020 his time improved significantly with the help of Bob Bowman, who coached Michael Phelps, an American swimming phenomenon. At the World Championships in 2023, Mr Marchand broke Mr Phelps' 15-year-old world record, setting a new time of four minutes and 2.5 seconds.

The Frenchman's closest rival will probably be the current Olympic champion, Chase Kalisz, an American. But Mr Kalisz will need to improve his personal-best of four minutes and 5.9 seconds to contend for gold. Those watching at La Defense will want not just a gold medal from Mr Marchand, but a new world record.

London's V&A gets in on Swift

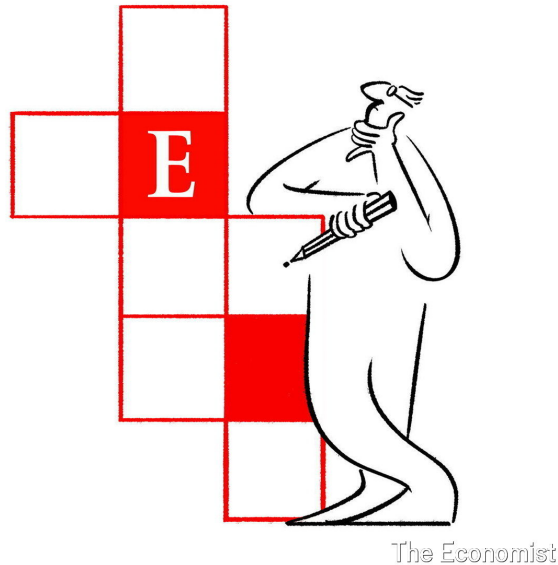


Bright blue cowboy boots. Floaty gowns and glitzy leotards. A slouchy white cardigan thrown over a piano stool. Wander through the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and you will find outfits worn by [Taylor Swift](#), America's best-selling pop star, across her "eras" (or thematic periods).

The exhibit provides an elegant framing for Ms Swift's flashy frocks, which she lent out from her personal collection. A gilded music room elevates the pastel dresses she wore for the album "Speak Now" (2010); a period gown peers down from a balcony, a reference to the lyrics of "Love Story" (2008). Clothes are paired with other items, including instruments and awards, that played a role in important moments in the singer's career.

The museum is shrewd to capitalise on Ms Swift's popularity, particularly as her Eras tour returns to Wembley stadium, Britain's largest arena, in August. As fans follow the trail, perhaps they may also stop to gaze at the V&A's treasures, such as statues of Roman goddesses and "Kensington Valhalla" mosaics.

Weekly crossword



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 down Feverish with malaria, shark becomes Trump's foe (6,6)

1 across Barbie's friend cuddles any perverted African (6)

2 across What talent has a young prime minister? (5)

3 across Flowing water washes master away (6)

Factual clues

1 down Democratic brat? (6,6)

1 across Nationality whose numbers employed by Britain's National Health Service have tripled since the covid-19 pandemic

(6)

2 across The Olympics' political caretaker? (5)

3 across Increasingly the way to watch sport (6)

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

The winners 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:

Hassan Alaoui Abdallaoui, Rabat, Morocco

Louise Coe, Nottingham, Britain

Fred Egler, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, America

They all gave the correct answers of Fish, butter, David Bowie, bread, steak. The theme is knives: fish knife, butter knife, Bowie knife, bread knife and steak knife.

The questions were:

Monday: Who was the lead singer of the 1980s pop group Marillion?

Tuesday: Land O' Lakes, Kerrygold and Lurpak are all brands of which grocery item?

Wednesday: Which rock singer adopted the alter ego Ziggy Stardust?

Thursday: Naan, chapati and roti are Indian versions of what food?

Friday: T-bone and ribeye are cuts of what kind of meat?

Brat

*The title of Charli XCX's new album, which has spawned countless memes of Kamala Harris.
Read the full story.*

**A writer should write with his eyes and a
painter paint with his ears**

Gertrude Stein