

Catch up: Ukrainians beaten back in Kursk; America strikes Houthis



Ukrainian forces are reported to have been all but pushed out of **Kursk**. They had captured large swathes of the Russia territory in a surprise attack last summer, but a months-long counterattack has now forced a retreat. [Ukrainian](#) soldiers continue to defend a small position on the Russian side of the border, and President Voldymyr Zelensky has denied reports that they are surrounded.

American air strikes targeting the **Houthis** have killed at least 31 people, according to the Iran-backed militia. Donald Trump said that the strikes were aimed at [securing shipping routes in the Red Sea](#) and vowed that America would “use overwhelming lethal force until we have achieved our objective”. The Houthis have been attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea since late 2023.

Nayib Bukele, the president of El Salvador, claimed on social media that more than 250 **gang members** had arrived in his country after being **deported** from the United States. Mr Bukele’s announcement came hours after a federal judge temporarily forbade Mr Trump from using an 18th century law to deport

alleged gang members. Mr Bukele evidently found the timing funny, writing: “Oopsie... Too late”.

A fire in a nightclub in **North Macedonia** killed at least 59 people and injured more than 100. Some 1,500 people were attending a concert at the Pulse club in Kocani, about 100km east of the capital, Skopje. Pance Toskovski, the interior minister, said that initial reports suggest that the blaze was caused by pyrotechnics.

Media-advocacy groups denounced Mr Trump’s decision to cut off funding for **Voice of America**, a government-sponsored news organisation. VoA was set up as a radio station during the second world war to counter Nazi propaganda in Europe and has since broadcast across the world in support of America’s foreign policy. Mr Trump said that the federal government should not pay for such “radical propaganda”.

Baidu became the latest Chinese tech giant to unveil a new **artificial-intelligence** model. Baidu was one of the first big Chinese firms to release an AI chatbot, but it fell behind rivals such as ByteDance and, in particular, DeepSeek. The swift rise of China’s AI industry has [spooked](#) investors in American competitors.

A SpaceX capsule carrying new crew members has docked with the **International Space Station**. Two of the astronauts on the ISS had intended to be there for only eight days, but technical issues with the spacecraft they arrived on kept them trapped in orbit for nine months. After a two-day handover, they will be able to come home at last, as soon as the weather allows re-entry.

Word of the week: *Fulul*, a term used by Syrians to refer to the remnants of the Assad regime. [Read the full story.](#)

Trump targets student protesters



Mahmoud Khalil was returning home from dinner with his pregnant wife last Saturday when he was arrested by immigration enforcement. Mr Khalil, a legal permanent resident of the United States, recently graduated from Columbia University, where he had helped lead [campus protests](#) against Israel and the war in Gaza. He has not been charged with a crime, but Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, revoked his green card, and Donald Trump, who called him “a Radical Foreign Pro-Hamas Student”, is trying to deport him anyway.

The administration’s attempt may prove legal, even if it never establishes that he protested in ways unprotected by free speech, or otherwise broke the law. That sets [an alarming precedent](#) of a president’s power to constrain speech. Mr Trump warned it was “the first arrest of many to come” of students “who have engaged in pro-terrorist, anti-Semitic, anti-American activity”. His administration has yet to describe at what point Mr Khalil crossed those lines—or where anyone else might.

Bolsonaro rallies supporters



Jair Bolsonaro, Brazil's president from 2019 to 2022, will hold a rally in Rio de Janeiro on Sunday against the country's government. The hard-right politician is expected to receive a [jail sentence](#) this year—he has been charged with trying to stage a coup after he lost the presidential election of 2022. On January 8th 2023 his supporters stormed government buildings. Months later, Brazil's electoral tribunal banned him from office for eight years.

Mr Bolsonaro remains the most [popular figure](#) on the right. His allies in Congress are pushing a bill to pardon participants in the January 8th attacks, which could pave the way for his return to electoral politics. They are getting help from abroad. Hours after Mr Bolsonaro was charged with attempting a coup in February, Donald Trump's media group sued a Brazilian Supreme Court judge overseeing the case, arguing that he has violated free speech protections in America, showing that Mr Bolsonaro's camp is co-operating with the MAGA movement.

AI matches wits with animal doctors



When a cat has the sniffles or a dog is off her food, pet owners usually turn to a veterinarian. But their bills can be high, so some owners seek guidance from [artificial-intelligence](#) chatbots like ChatGPT. A new study by Bob Fischer of Texas State University and colleagues examines whether these chatbots, powered by large language models, give good advice.

The researchers asked 4,350 questions about animal health, two-fifths of which had been posed by real pet owners on Reddit, a popular online forum. The study found that most of the ten chatbots tested provided answers that were more helpful than harmful. The exception was Llama-3.3, an open-source AI model—the only one named after an animal. Still, experts caution that although AI can sometimes help, it is no substitute for a trained vet—especially in emergencies.

The appeal of Italian football



Europe's top football leagues can feel predictable. Bayern Munich won Germany's Bundesliga 11 times between 2013 and 2023; Manchester City have claimed the past four English Premier League titles (though they're [struggling this season](#)). In recent years Italy's Serie A has bucked the trend; the past three seasons have each had different champions.

This year's title race is particularly competitive. With around a quarter of the season to play, three teams have a strong chance of winning. On Sunday Inter Milan, the reigning champions and current league leaders, face Atalanta, a side from Bergamo just three points behind them in third place. Between the two is Napoli, whose manager, Antonio Conte, is known for his ruthless discipline. His experience could help the southern Italian club claim their fourth league title.

Spies, lies and dinner parties

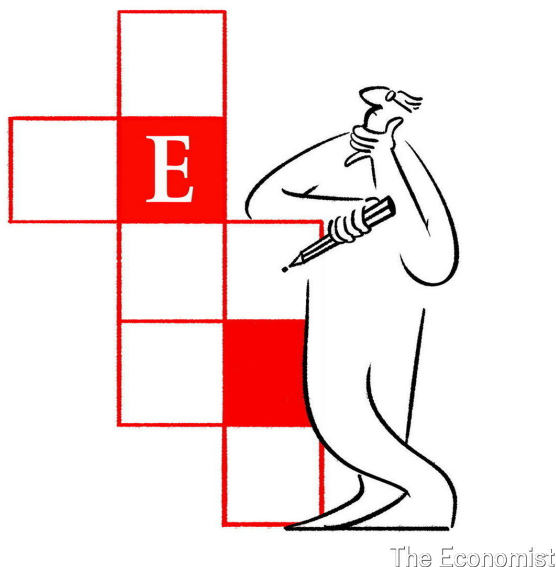


Steven Soderbergh once made glossy Hollywood blockbusters such as “Ocean’s Eleven” and “Erin Brockovich”. But for the past decade the director has focused on smaller films. “Presence”, a film about a haunted house, came out in January. Now he’s back with “Black Bag”, a spy thriller set in London.

Cate Blanchett and Michael Fassbender star as Kathryn and George, married British agents whose relationship is tested when she is accused of stealing malware—and he is assigned to investigate. The cast includes Pierce Brosnan and Naomie Harris, veterans of the [James Bond franchise](#). But don’t expect stunts or explosions. The plot mostly unfolds in dinner-party exchanges about spies sleeping with spies.

The web of deception keeps “Black Bag” engaging and fun. Yet its characters feel underdeveloped, making it hard to care whether Kathryn is betraying her husband or her country. After a decade of modest experiments, perhaps it’s time for Mr Soderbergh to take on something flashy again.

Weekly crossword



We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword, 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 down* Best contests are confusing for important secretary (5,7)
- 1 across* Country in the bottom left-hand corner of Paradise (6)
- 2 across* Move to the end of Egypt to save money (6)
- 3 across* Is the Financial Times fair about trade policy? (6)

Factual clues

- 1 down* Trump administration proponent of a strong dollar (5,7)
- 1 across* Where all eight parties in Parliament have agreed to raise defence spending (6)

2 across What South Africa's government failed to pass this week (6)

3 across Tax the Coalition for a Prosperous America favours (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:

Dave Halton, Wigan, England

Ella Rich, Peachtree Corners, Georgia, America

Nuno Ibérico, Lisbon, Portugal

They all gave the correct answers of swimming pool, Picnic at Hanging Rock, Uruguay round, kitchen debates and coffee. The theme is types of table: pool table, picnic table, round table, kitchen table and coffee table.

The questions were:

Monday: What must be at least 50 metres long and 25 metres wide to be used in the Olympics?

Tuesday: Which 1975 Australian film, directed by Peter Weir, concerns the disappearance of a group of schoolgirls?

Wednesday: What term, linked to a South American country, was used to describe the series of negotiations that led to the

establishment of the World Trade Organisation?

Thursday: What term was given to the series of discussions between Richard Nixon and Nikita Khrushchev in Moscow in 1959?

Friday: Lungo and doppio are both types of which drink?

Fulul

A term used by Syrians to refer to the remnants of the Assad regime.

Read the full story.

Experience is the teacher of all things.

Julius Caesar