

## Catch up: Hamas downplays ceasefire hopes; Musk feuds with Brazil



Antony Blinken, America's secretary of state, arrived in **Israel** to [push for a ceasefire](#) to end the fighting between Israel and Hamas. Though his boss, President Joe Biden, is optimistic, a Hamas official told the BBC, a British public broadcaster, that mediators meeting in Qatar last week were "selling illusions". Israeli's armed forces killed at least 21 people in air strikes on Gaza on Sunday, according to the local health authority.

**Donald Trump** hit back at **Kamala Harris's** economic plans at a rally in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. Mr Trump accused [the vice-president](#) of making Americans pay a "Kamala Harris inflation tax". On Friday Ms Harris called the Republican nominee's plans for [large tariffs](#) on all imported goods a "Trump tax". She also promised to ban "price gouging" by grocery stores and help first-time home-buyers.

**Libya's** central bank halted all its operations after its information-technology director was kidnapped. Musab Msallem was taken from his home on Sunday. The bank has said it will not go back to

work until he is freed. Last week the bank came under siege by armed men trying to force its governor to resign, according to Agence France-Presse.

There were more protests against Nicolás Maduro, **Venezuela's** authoritarian president. Mr Maduro is clinging to power after [stealing an election](#) in July, and has tried to stifle discontent by locking up thousands of demonstrators. Even so, María Corina Machado, the most popular opposition politician, addressed a large crowd in Caracas, the capital, vowing “we will not leave the streets.”

Volodymyr Zelensky said that Ukrainian troops were “strengthening” and “expanding” their positions in **Kursk**, a border region in Russia. Ukraine’s president once again requested permission from the country’s Western allies to use long-range weapons they had supplied to hit targets within Russia. Russia said that Ukraine had used Western rockets—possibly deployed using American-made [HIMARS launchers](#)—to blow up a bridge in Kursk.

The **Southern African Development Community**, a bloc of 16 countries, warned that droughts are causing food shortages and economic hardship for nearly 68m people in the region. Droughts have worsened because of [El Niño](#), a weather system that has caused [extremely hot temperatures](#) in the southern hemisphere. Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe have declared a “state of disaster”.

Medical staff across **India** staged a 24-hour strike in protest at the rape and murder of a female trainee doctor in Kolkata. The Indian Medical Association, which represents doctors, said that all non-essential services were shut down on Saturday. In a letter to Narendra Modi, the country’s prime minister, the IMA demanded that more action be taken to protect medical workers from violence.

**Word of the week:** kudzu, an invasive species of climbing vine.

[Read the full story.](#)

*As America prepares to vote in national elections in November, keep abreast of the political news by reading [The US in brief](#), our daily update. [Sign up](#) to receive it as a newsletter each weekday.*

## Singapore's new PM steps out



Lawrence Wong will deliver his first National Day Rally speech on Sunday. It is Singapore's most important political address of the year. The city-state's prime minister will speak in Malay, Mandarin and English, catering to different people that make up the population. [Mr Wong](#) took office on May 15th; he is only Singapore's fourth prime minister since independence in 1965, from which point the country has achieved [astounding economic success](#).

Mr Wong faces several questions to make sure that continues. One is what to do about Singapore's rapidly ageing population, which will require more spending on healthcare and social support. The proportion of Singapore's citizens who are over 65 rose to 19% last year, and will grow to almost 25% by the end of the decade. Mr Wong seems to acknowledge the problem. "More of us will feel sandwiched, having to look after children as well as elderly parents," he said earlier this month.

# The cost of renting in America



Many renters yearn for the peace and quiet of their own apartment. But living alone can be ruinously expensive. To calculate its affordability, *The Economist* created a “[Carrie Bradshaw Index](#)”, named after the protagonist of “Sex and the City” and champion of solo living. We compared median studio-apartment rents in 100 big American cities with the local median wage. We then calculated a proportionate “Bradshaw score” based on the rule that rent shouldn’t swallow more than 30% of a renter’s gross income.

Any score below one is deemed “unaffordable”. In New York studio renters would need to earn \$147,000 to stay under 30%—more than double the median wage. This gives it a score of just 0.4. But there’s better news elsewhere. After a construction boom, 24 cities which we labelled unaffordable last year are now affordable, including Phoenix, Dallas and Philadelphia. That’s good for aspiring Carries, if they’re willing to leave Manhattan.



# The drama of South Korea's politics



Lee Jae-myung (pictured) cruised to a second term as leader of South Korea's main opposition party with a record vote share. His time in the job has been eventful. He [survived an assassination attempt](#) in January and led his party to victory in parliamentary elections in April. He has also been indicted on bribery and corruption charges, which he denies.

The drama looks set to continue. The DP will have to push its agenda in parliament amidst fractious relations with the conservative president, [Yoon Suk Yeol](#). A factory worker turned civil-rights lawyer, Mr Lee has called for the introduction of a universal basic income and promised to focus on “livelihood issues”. By cementing his hold over the party he will also set himself up to be the DP's presumptive nominee ahead of South Korea's next presidential election in 2027. That would give him a chance to avenge his razor-thin loss in 2022.

## Exploring the ocean on screen



James Cameron can't stay away from water. The American director's feature films have involved mutant piranhas, advanced undersea aliens and the [most famous shipwreck in history](#). He has also produced an array of deep-sea documentaries. They include a series that premieres on National Geographic on Sunday (and is available to stream on Disney+ and Hulu from Monday).

"OceanXplorers" shows viewers a vast undiscovered marine world, including sperm-whale hunting grounds, the edge of the Arctic ice cap and swiftly warming polar-bear habits in Svalbard, a Norwegian archipelago.

The show's star is the *OceanXplorer* itself: a massive marine-research ship equipped with labs, deep-sea vessels, analytic software and "onboard Hollywood-level production capabilities". The company behind the ship was founded by Ray Dalio, a hedge-fund magnate, and his son. It seeks "to explore the ocean and bring it back to the world". That means the *Xplorer*'s missions are as much about publicity as research, which explains the involvement of Hollywood's ocean-loving director.

# A celebration of Afro-Colombian culture

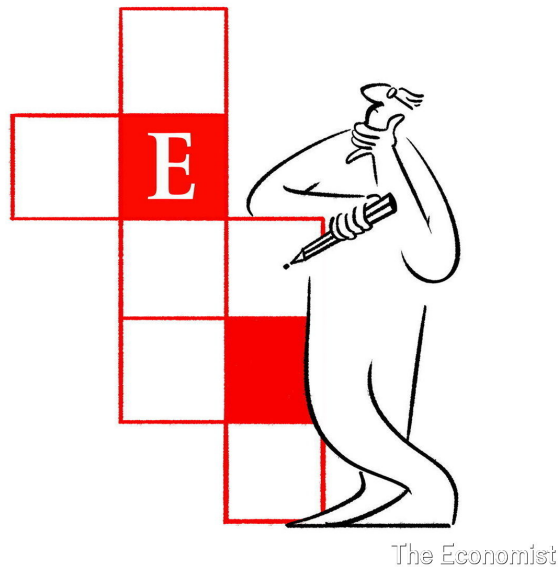


Every August, the sounds of the *marimba de chonta*, an instrument known as the “piano of the jungle”, spill over Cali, a city in south-west Colombia, during the [Petronio Álvarez Pacific Music Festival](#). It is one of the region’s largest celebrations of Afro-descendant culture. Over six days, around 2,000 musical groups play styles and rhythms with west African origins. The festival reaches its climax on Sunday, with the final of its competition (bands face off in four musical categories). The action then moves into house parties, known as *arrullos*.

Cali has the second-largest black population in South America. But the sounds increasingly work their magic on visiting hips, too. This year roughly 500,000 visitors are attending, many of them foreign. Fuelling the revelry is an ancestral liquor called *viche*, made and sold by Afro-Colombians from the Pacific regions. For many, the *fiesta* is an annual money-maker: some 37bn pesos (\$9.2m) changed hands last year.



# 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 Underground treasure bonanza only occasionally disguised (12)

1 across Tabloid with plot showing where to get a tan (6)

2 across A bit of troublesome currency (6)

3 across Natural state is fresh air, we're told (6)

## Factual clues

1 down One way to describe much of Britain's critical infrastructure (12)

1 across A place to soak up ultraviolet rays (6)

2 across What has slumped after a Ukrainian incursion into Russia (6)

3 across Something becoming less common on European beaches (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [crossword@economist.com](mailto: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:

**Elizabeth Hawes Unangst**, Edgewater, Maryland, America

**Colin Robertson**, Naarden, The Netherlands

**Kent Powell**, Atlanta, Georgia, America

They all gave the correct answers of Enduring Love, storms, Nick Fury, first cause, and the Rolling Stones. The theme is code names for US military operations: Enduring Freedom (Afghanistan), Desert Storm (first Gulf War), Urgent Fury (Grenada), Just Cause (Panama), and Rolling Thunder (bombing of North Vietnam).

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which novel by Ian McEwan, later made into a film starring Daniel Craig, begins with a tragic balloon accident?

**Tuesday:** Agnes, Babet and Jocelyn are all names for what type of phenomenon that hit Europe over the last 12 months?

**Wednesday:** Which character played by Samuel Jackson, is the director of SHIELD in the Marvel movies?

**Thursday:** *Primum movens*, a Latin term sometimes used to argue for the existence of God, has what meaning in English?

**Friday:** Mick Taylor and Brian Jones were former members of which rock group?





# Kudzu

*An invasive species of climbing vine.  
Read the full story.*

**You are who you choose to be.**

*Ted Hughes*