

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

Kaja Kallas, the **European Union's** top diplomat, convened a meeting of European foreign ministers for Monday to discuss the war in **Ukraine**. She said that any deal between America and Russia must include the EU and Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, has ruled out ceding territory to Russia. **Donald Trump** and **Vladimir Putin**, Russia's president, are expected to [meet in Alaska](#) on August 15th.

Israel's finance minister said the government's plan to occupy **Gaza City** is "not how you win a war". [Bezalel Smotrich](#), who has urged the full occupation of the Gaza Strip and the "voluntary" emigration of its inhabitants, said he had "lost faith" that Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister, could achieve a "decisive victory". Israel's European allies have sharply criticised [Mr Netanyahu's plan](#).

Iran criticised a deal between **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** to allow an [American-run transport route](#) in the Caucasus. Ali Akbar Velayati, an adviser to Iran's supreme leader, said the corridor would be "a graveyard for Trump's mercenaries". **Russia** coolly said the deal "merits a positive assessment" but warned America

not to repeat the “counterproductive outcomes” of its interventions in the Middle East.

South Korea's army said **North Korea** had begun removing some loudspeakers that broadcast propaganda across their border. On August 4th South Korea began dismantling its own speakers, which had blasted out a mix of world news and K-pop music. [Lee Jae-myung](#), South Korea's president since June, has argued that his country needs to “communicate and engage” with the North.

Three Thai soldiers were injured by a landmine on the border between **Thailand** and **Cambodia**. Thailand's army accused Cambodia of planting the munitions along their shared border. Cambodia, which used landmines during the 20th century, denied planting new mines. Thailand and Cambodia fought a [five-day war](#) along their disputed border last month. They signed a ceasefire on July 29th.

Police in **London** arrested more than 466 people at a protest supporting **Palestine Action**. Parliament banned the [activist group](#), which has attacked defence manufacturers and military bases, using anti-terrorism laws in July. It was the first time the legislation had been used against a group that primarily targets property, not people. Police had warned of arrests ahead of the demonstration.

Two **Japanese boxers** died from brain injuries after fighting in separate bouts on August 2nd. Kotari Shigetoshi died on Friday and Urakawa Hiromasa on Saturday. Both were aged 28. The Japan Boxing Commission said that title fights organised by the Oriental and Pacific Boxing Federation would now be ten rounds, rather than 12.

Word of the week: Braumeister, Germany's master brewers. They are trying new recipes to tempt young Germans back to drinking beer. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

China's great leap into AI

Six months after a Chinese firm called DeepSeek shocked the world with a powerful artificial-intelligence model made at a fraction of the price of Western ones, the initial frenzy has morphed into a determination to diffuse the [technology across China](#).

Advances in Chinese open-source AI models have cut the cost of using and customising the technology. Along with strong state support, that has paved the way for many startups to spring up across the country. In May, Gartner, a research firm, found that 43% of Chinese companies are using generative AI, up from 8% less than one year earlier.

But that increased adoption hasn't translated into meaningful productivity gains or profit growth just yet. And there are risks with rolling out AI so quickly. More than 750 Chinese health-care institutions have deployed DeepSeek. That rapid adoption prompted researchers at top universities to call for stronger regulation.

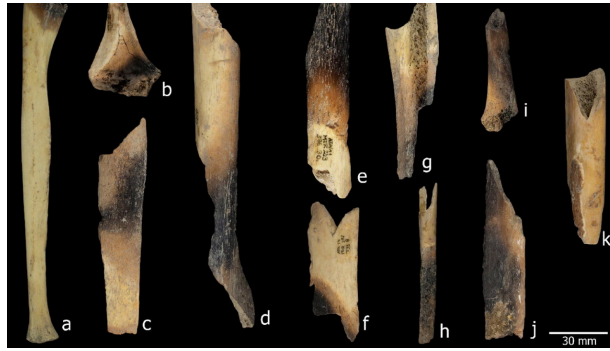


Photograph: Reuters

Starvation in Sudan

While much of the world's attention is focused on the [horrors in Gaza](#), another [famine is under way in Sudan](#). On August 5th the UN's World Food Programme said that residents of el-Fasher, in the western region of Darfur, faced starvation at hitherto unprecedented levels. Though the WFP says it has lorries ready to enter the city, for over a year the Rapid Support Forces, one of the two main belligerents in Sudan's civil war, has been blocking access.

The RSF has been tightening the noose around el-Fasher ever since the national army ousted it from Khartoum, the capital, in March. And as it has become harder for food to get in, it has also become more difficult for the capital's residents to leave. According to a new report by Yale's Humanitarian Research Lab, the paramilitary group now controls all routes out of the city. And even for those who do manage to escape the future looks grim. The nearby town of Tawila is experiencing a cholera outbreak.

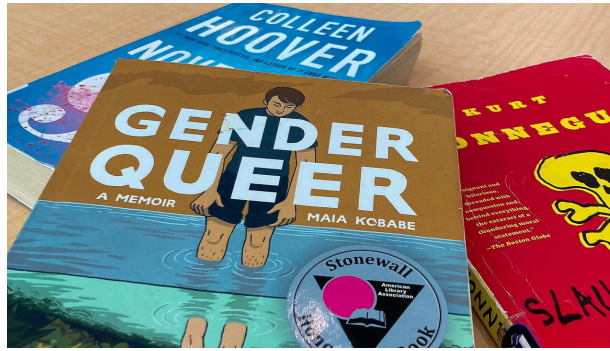


Photograph: M.D.Guillén/IPHES

An early taste for human

Archaeologists recently made a grisly discovery at the *El Mirador* cave in Spain: the remains of a human cannibal feast. Researchers at the Catalan Institute of Human Paleoecology and Social Evolution, as well as other institutions, found human remains with visible signs of butchering dating back to about 5,600 years ago, during the Late Neolithic period.

The remains belonged to 11 individuals—which radiocarbon dating revealed to have included children, adolescents and adults—who were probably a family. Analysis of around 650 bone fragments showed evidence of human tooth marks, as well as suggestions that the remains had been boiled and chopped. There were no indications of ritual or funerary intent, suggesting that such cannibalism was systematic, in this case following a suspected clash between neighbours. The Late Neolithic age saw more conflict between humans as they transitioned from foraging to farming. The findings, published in *Scientific Reports*, a journal, suggest cannibalism was more widespread than previously thought.



Photograph: Getty Images

The culture war comes for the bookshelves

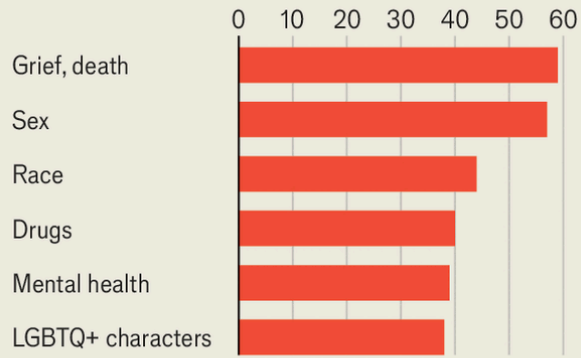
Sex with a shape-shifting fairy who is sometimes part-wolf, part-bear is not everyone's cup of tea. Despite this, Sarah J. Maas, a leading writer of [“romantasy” fiction](#), has sold more than 75m novels, mostly to young adults and teenagers. Five of Ms Maas's works, including the one containing the aforementioned beastly tryst, are among the most frequently banned books in American schools.

Book bans are increasingly common in America. PEN America, a free-speech group, recorded around 10,000 instances in 2023-24—a four-fold rise in two years. Depictions of sex and drug-taking are common reasons. But references to homosexuality and racism also draw objections. Even classics by Maya Angelou and Margaret Atwood have been pulled from shelves.

The issue has become politicised. Joe Biden created a “book ban co-ordinator” role to address the trend. In January Donald Trump's education department eliminated the position. Culture warriors cheered. But some worry that indiscriminate censorship could do lasting harm to your shelves.

Bonfire of the profanities

US, most-banned school books*,
by subject matter†, % of total
July 1st 2023-June 30th 2024



*1,091 titles †Books can appear in more than one category
Source: PEN America

Image: The Economist



Illustration: The Economist

Mini 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 across Initially good north-western state is missing its middle. What a monster! (6)

2 across A capital folder (6)

3 across Amend a clergyman with incomplete praise (6)

1 down Kinky randy merger does not respect boundaries (11)

Straight clues

1 across Mythological female creature that appears in "Wednesday", a Netflix hit (6)

2 across The capital city of the Philippines (6)

3 across What the Bureau of Labour Statistics did to previous months' job numbers, enraging Donald Trump (6)

1 down Redraw electoral boundary for political gain (11)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am BST on Monday to [\[email protected\]](#). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

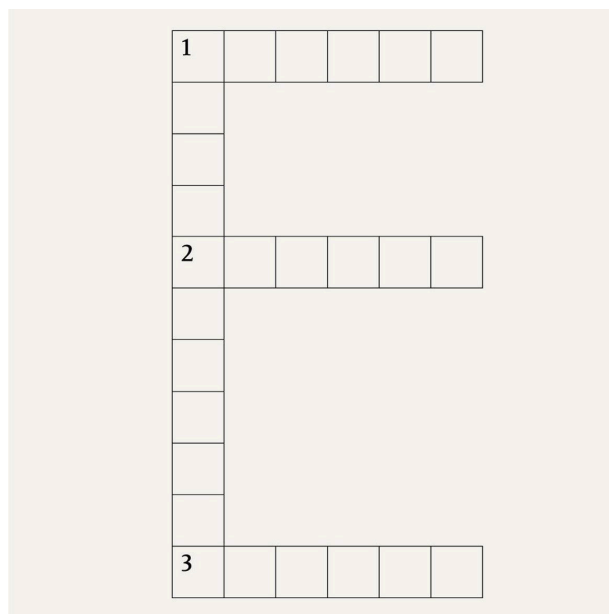


Image: The Economist



Illustration: The Economist

The winners of this week's quiz

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

Kerst and Annelies Troost, Radda in Chianti, Italy

Dakota Evans, Syracuse, New York, America

Simon Richards, Beaconsfield, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of: No Direction Home, Jenny from the Block, blue period, The Muppets Take Manhattan and Andrew Jackson. The theme is boy bands: One Direction, New Kids on the Block, Blue, Take That and the Jacksons (or the Jackson 5).

The questions were:

Monday: What was the title of Martin Scorsese's 2005 documentary about Bob Dylan?

Tuesday: Which song by Jennifer Lopez, from the "This is Me... Then" album, is about her desire to remain true to her roots in the Bronx?

Wednesday: What term is generally used for Picasso's artistic style in the years 1901-1904?

Thursday: Which film concerns the Muppets attempt to conquer Broadway?

Friday: The face of which US President is featured on the \$20 bill?

When I make something, it's only half finished. When people use it—for years and years—then it is finished.

Issey Miyake