

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Vladimir Putin called for “direct talks” with **Ukraine**, but did not respond to a European [ceasefire ultimatum](#). In a press briefing early on Sunday, Russia’s president said the discussions would “remove the root causes of the conflict”. He suggested they take place in Turkey as early as May 15th. Afterwards Ukraine’s president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said “Ukraine is ready to meet”, but did not comment on Mr Putin’s proposal.

India and **Pakistan** accused each other of “violations” hours after agreeing to a [ceasefire](#). Reports emerged of shelling and explosions near the border between both countries which each side blamed on the other. Earlier America’s secretary of state said that the South Asian neighbours would “start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site” (something that neither has confirmed).

Bangladesh’s interim government banned the country’s former ruling party, the **Awami League**, from all political activity under an anti-terrorism law. The Awami League and its leader, Sheikh Hasina, were ousted last year following a [massive uprising](#) during which they are accused of killing hundreds of protesters. The party dismissed the decision as “illegal”. The ban will remain in place until a tribunal completes an investigation.

Trade talks between **America** and **China** began in Switzerland. Scott Bessent, Donald Trump’s treasury secretary, and He Lifeng, Xi Jinping’s vice-premier, are leading the negotiations. They are the first face-to-face talks since Mr Trump imposed tariffs of 145% on [China](#), which responded with 125% levies of its own. On Friday Mr Trump suggested an 80% tariff on China “seems right”.

Leo XIV held his [first meeting](#) with all the Roman Catholic church's cardinals since being elected pope. Explaining his priorities as pontiff, Leo urged the church to preserve the “precious legacy” of his liberal predecessor, Francis. He also warned that artificial intelligence is a challenge to “human dignity, justice and labour” that will require Catholics to engage in “social teaching”.

The Trump administration reportedly threatened UN agencies with funding cuts if they did not support an American-led **aid** plan for **Gaza**. According to the *Financial Times*, Steve Witkoff, America's special envoy to the Middle East, issued the warning earlier this week. The new [proposal](#) involves funneling aid into Gaza with the help of American military contractors. UN officials worry that this would endanger their staff.

A federal judge in America ordered the release of a detained **Tufts University** student from Turkey. In March immigration authorities arrested Rumeysa Ozturk, who contributed to an op-ed critical of Israel for a student newspaper. Her visa was revoked. [The Trump administration](#) accused her of participating in “activities in support of Hamas”. The judge said officials lacked evidence and that her arrest violated free-speech rights.

Simon Mann, an Old Etonian who participated in an attempted coup in **Equatorial Guinea** in 2004, died aged 72. The son of a former England cricket captain, Mr Mann joined the British Army before becoming a mercenary. He was imprisoned for around five years for his role in [the putsch](#), which allegedly involved the son of Margaret Thatcher, a former British prime minister.

Word of the week: Webtoons, digital comics whose global market was worth some \$9bn in 2024. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: AP

Saudi Arabia's oil-price dilemma

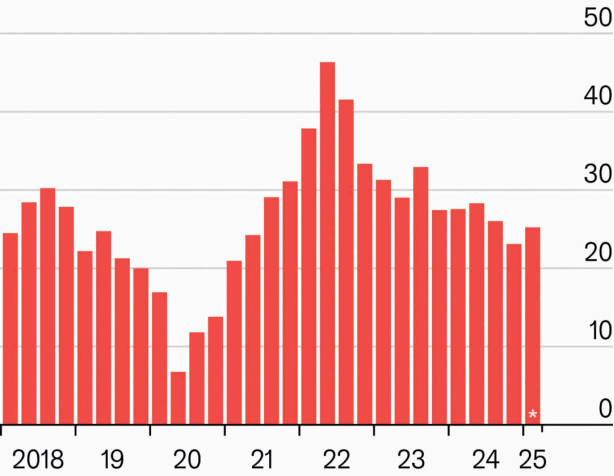
On Sunday Saudi Aramco, the kingdom's national oil company, releases first-quarter results. Analysts expect a year-on-year fall in profits and production at its lowest in ten years. Aramco can blame low oil prices, partly due to Donald Trump's tariff wars.

But Aramco—supplier of about 10% of the world's crude oil—is also being hampered by its own political masters. Since last month the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies, or OPEC+, which Saudi Arabia leads, has twice cranked up output by more than expected. That has helped push prices down by 15% since early April.

Having cut production by some 6m b/d in recent years, the group appears keen to claw back market share. But Saudi Arabia also wants to [punish members of OPEC+](#) that produce more than their quotas, such as Iraq and Kazakhstan. Saudi Arabia can probably cope better with price slumps, but the cheats are showing no signs of toeing the line. Prices may have to fall further still.

Oil and toil

Saudi Aramco, net profit, \$bn



Source: LSEG Workspace

*Estimate



Photograph: Getty Images

India and Pakistan step back from the brink

For 18 days following a terrorist attack in India-controlled Kashmir tensions between India and Pakistan had been mounting. On Saturday the two nuclear-armed powers struck military air bases and cities far beyond Kashmir. But just as the first signs of a nuclear stand-off were emerging, Donald Trump fired a welcome salvo. Writing on social media, America's president said both sides had agreed to a "FULL AND IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE". So far [the truce seems to be holding](#) along the two countries' 3,000km border, though there are reports of explosions in Kashmir.

What now? Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, said that both sides have committed "to start talks on a broad set of issues at a neutral site". Neither India nor Pakistan, however, has confirmed whether such discussions will take place and what they would entail. The outcome of any potential negotiations is unclear. And a bigger question remains: how long will peace hold before the conflict reignites? For now, though, both India and Pakistan are claiming victory.



Photograph: Alamy

Are talks between America and Iran stalling?

Envoys from [America and Iran](#) are expected to meet on Sunday for their fourth round of nuclear talks. The past three have yielded positive statements but little progress. Indeed, America seems unsure what it wants from the negotiations. President Donald Trump said on Wednesday that he has not decided whether a new deal should allow Iran to continue enriching uranium—perhaps the most important question in the negotiations. Asked about enrichment at a think-tank event on the same day, J.D. Vance, the vice-president, seemed to argue both sides of the issue.

Abbas Araghchi, the Iranian foreign minister, was due to visit Saudi Arabia and Qatar on Saturday. The timing is no coincidence: Mr Trump will visit both countries, along with the United Arab Emirates, on a four-day trip next week. Gulf states will urge America's president to make a deal with Iran; the alternative is war.



Photograph: ITV STUDIOS

The best of British television

The BAFTA Film Awards are often criticised for focusing too much on Hollywood, but the British Academy's small-screen equivalent pays more attention to homegrown fare. At Sunday's BAFTA Television Awards ceremony in London, Richard Gadd's semi-autobiographical stalking drama, "Baby Reindeer", is sure to add a few trophies to an already glittering collection.

Three very different literary adaptations may be among the other winners: "Slow Horses", based on Mick Herron's spy thrillers; "Rivals", a reimagining of Jilly Cooper's 1980s romp; and "Wolf Hall: The Mirror and the Light", an adaptation of the final novel in Hilary Mantel's Tudor trilogy.

"Mr Bates vs the Post Office" (pictured) should have a red-letter day, too. ITV will receive a special award for commissioning the series, which is also nominated in the actor, actress and limited drama categories. It has already forced politicians to put right the Post Office's [Horizon IT scandal](#), considered one of Britain's worst miscarriages of justice. That counts for more than even the shiniest trophy.



Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, 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*:

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

Cryptic clues

1 across Ayatollah or Emir encircles Asian city (6)

2 across A headless brain gets scrambled in African capital(5)

3 across Musical-sounding country (6)

1 down Sadly, we clean wrong for Victor in Singapore (12)

Factual clues

1 across Big city 30km from Muridke (6)

2 across Nigerians spent 16.5trn of them in 2023 on off-grid power (5)

3 across Premature entrant to eurozone (6)

1 down Man who led his party to victory in an election on May 3rd (12)

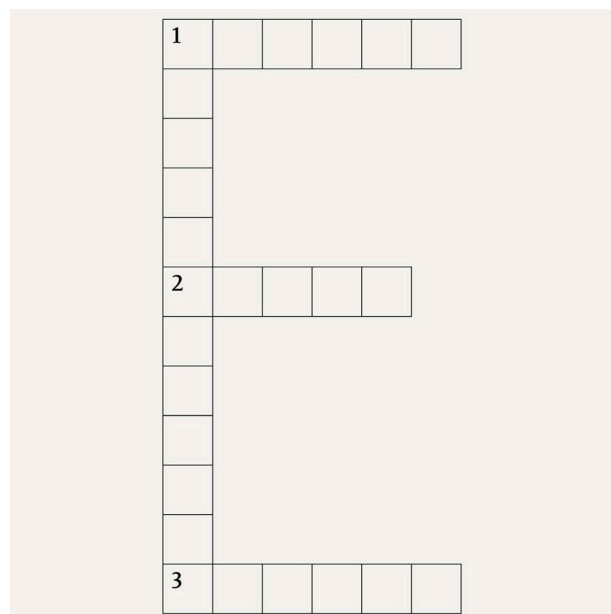


Image: The Economist



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:

Ian Meades, Walla Walla, Washington, America

Gregor Peltri, Leipzig, Germany

Guntars Silders, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of Fantasy Island, Russian roulette, the Italian Stallion, Julius Caesar and The French Connection. The theme is salad dressings; thousand island, Russian, Italian, Caesar and French

The questions were:

Monday: Which tv show starred Ricardo Montalban as Mr Roarke and Herve Villechaize as his assistant, Tattoo?

Tuesday: What deadly game does Christopher Walken play in a memorable scene in The Deer Hunter?

Wednesday: What was Rocky Balboa's nickname in the boxing movies?

Thursday: Which Shakespeare play features the line "Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war"?

Friday: In which film did Gene Hackman win his first Oscar?

When you finish a creation, take something off. Diminish, diminish, diminish.

Joan Crawford