

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

A search for **Iran's president, Ebrahim Raisi**, was under way after his helicopter was forced into a "hard landing" in the country's mountainous north-west. State media blamed the accident on bad weather. Mr Raisi and Hossein Amirabdollahian, Iran's foreign minister, were returning from a state visit to Azerbaijan when their helicopter split from a convoy of three; the other two aircraft landed safely in the city of Tabriz. Rescue teams appear to have struggled to reach the site of the crash amid heavy fog.

Jake Sullivan, America's national security adviser, travelled to Israel to push once more for a ceasefire agreement. He is expected to urge Israeli leaders to avoid a full-scale attack on Gaza's southern city of Rafah. The prime minister, Binyamin Netanyahu, is also facing pressure from his most powerful political rival, **Benny Gantz**, who **threatened to pull** out of Mr Netanyahu's war cabinet soon if he did not deliver a post-war plan for Gaza.

Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, warned that Russia could yet expand its assault on Kharkiv, a north-eastern region where it launched a surprise attack on May 10th, as he called on Western allies to increase supplies of military aid. He suggested Russian forces had advanced up to 10km before being stopped. He said that Ukraine had only around a quarter of the air defences that it needed.

Jacob Zuma, South Africa's former president, launched his manifesto at a splashy show in Johannesburg, promising to tackle crime and unemployment. Mr Zuma said his new party, uMkhonto weSizwe (MK), was aiming for a parliamentary majority at **elections on May 29th**. That will not happen, but Mr Zuma could

[swing the vote](#) by stealing support from the ruling ANC, which he fell out with last year.

Rudy Giuliani became the 18th person to be indicted in [Arizona](#) for conspiring to overturn the presidential election result in 2020. Donald Trump's former lawyer is accused of trying to pressure legislators to reverse Joe Biden's win and encourage Republican electors to certify Mr Trump. Mr Giuliani was served papers immediately after his 80th birthday party, at which he had seemingly mocked the authorities for not indicting him.

A sixth person was killed in **New Caledonia**, as rioting in the French overseas territory continued into a sixth night. French police are trying to regain control of a road linking the main airport with the capital, Noumea. The unrest was sparked by plans to expand the franchise on the Pacific Island, a move that the indigenous population worries will stifle hopes of independence.

Oleksandr Usyk became boxing's first undisputed heavyweight world champion since 1999. In an epic battle in Saudi Arabia, the Ukrainian won on points against Tyson Fury, a Briton. A rematch is expected later this year. Contests between the world's best boxers [have become rare](#).

Word of the week: *Berliner Schnauze*, the curt, gruff way that people speak in Germany's capital. [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.



Photo: AP

President Biden speaks to the class of 2024

Commencement addresses are typically a win-win for speakers and the universities who host them. The high-profile guest delivers an inspiring message to a friendly audience, while colleges bask in his or her reflected glory. But President Joe Biden's address to the class of 2024 at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia on Sunday, was met with muted enthusiasm.

The historically black college has not seen the same levels of unrest as many other American universities, which have been roiled by [anti-Israel protests](#) in recent weeks. Yet the White House was worried enough about an unfriendly or disruptive reception that it dispatched a senior official to meet Morehouse students and faculty ahead of Mr Biden's speech. Some students expressed concern about whether the president's support of Israel's war in Gaza—which is [more tentative](#) than it once was—would overshadow the ceremony. In the end, the address was sombre; and protest mostly sartorial (some students wore *keffiyehs*) and silent.



Photo: AP

Elections in the Dominican Republic

Compared with politics in the rest of the region, those of the Dominican Republic seem dull. Presidents are usually popular and elections are fair. That is not expected to change when the Caribbean nation goes to the polls on Sunday. With an approval rating around 70%, Luis Abinader, the mild-mannered incumbent president, is set for a [thumping victory](#). His Modern Revolutionary Party is tipped to retain majorities in both houses of Congress.

Since taking office in 2020, Mr Abinader has won plaudits for his business-friendly management of the economy and an anti-corruption drive. Voters' primary concern, though, is security: they are worried about both a rising murder rate at home and the chaos in neighbouring Haiti. But Haiti also provides the ruling party with a scapegoat. Mr Abinader has promised to complete a 164km border wall and to continue deporting Haitian migrants. The Dominican Republic sent home 250,000 last year.



Photo: Getty Images

Jeff Bezos's space tours are back

Good news for aspiring space tourists: on Sunday Blue Origin—the rocket company owned by Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder—resumes its mini-tours of outer space. (Defined technically, if arbitrarily, as everywhere more than 100km above Earth's mean sea level.) The programme was put on hold in September 2022 after a launch failure. (The rocket was carrying instruments, not people.) America's Federal Aviation Administration has now given permission for the launch to go ahead.

People with enough money—prices are confidential, but don't expect much change from \$1m—will again be able to enjoy an experience like that of Alan Shepard, [America's](#) first astronaut. Shepard performed a sub-orbital space hop in 1961, 23 days after the first full orbit of Earth by Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet cosmonaut. Blue Origin's rocket, dubbed "New Shepard", has previously launched six crewed missions, one of which carried Mr Bezos himself.

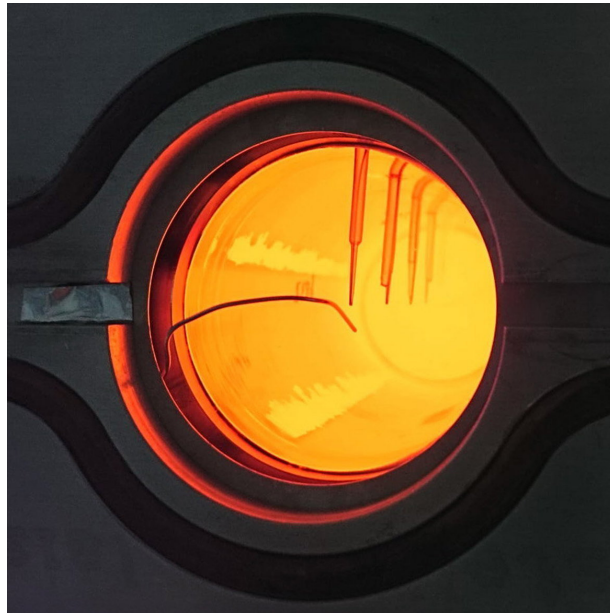


Photo: ETH Zurich/Emiliano Casati

Making the sun's rays capable of forging steel

One-quarter of the world's energy is used to power industrial processes like smelting steel and making cement. These processes require huge amounts of heat and rely on [burning fossil fuels](#). Collectively they account for half of global emissions of greenhouse gas. A better alternative would be to capture and concentrate solar energy using sun-tracking mirrors. That, though, becomes inefficient when manufacturers try to generate temperatures above 1000°C, because around 60% of the light (and heat) escapes, even when they use state-of-the-art tools.

Now, though, engineers reporting in *Device*, a journal, claim to have drastically improved the efficiency of this approach. They shielded a solar receiver (the focus of the sun's mirrored rays) in quartz, a mineral that traps light. This allowed them to reach 1050°C at 70% efficiency, reducing the loss of heat and light by half. The researchers intend to refine the technique, which could one day end a dependence as old as the Bronze Age—that of metallurgy on fossil fuels.



Photo: EPA

Weekend profile: Andrei Belousov, Russia's new defence minister

On May 12th the Kremlin unexpectedly dismissed Sergei Shoigu as Russia's defence minister after 12 years in post. His replacement is Andrei Belousov, a technocrat with few ties to his country's security bloc. Although the appointment was a surprise, its logic seems clear: Vladimir Putin is [betting on a long war of attrition](#) in Ukraine.

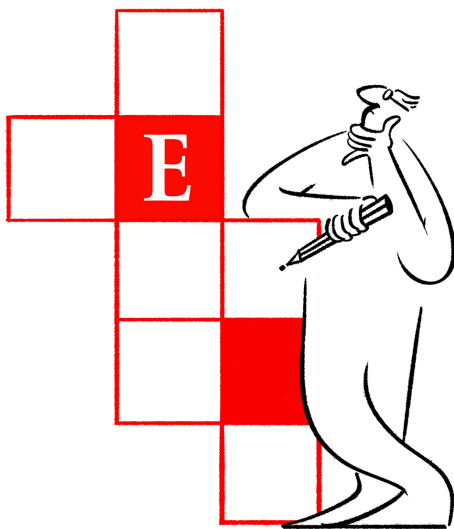
The new defence minister was born in Moscow; his father was an economist, his mother a radiographer. In his youth Mr Belousov is said to have enjoyed martial arts, including karate (these days he supposedly prefers rock climbing). He studied economics and at first pursued a career in academia. He never served in the armed forces and, according to a source close to the Kremlin, will harbour no ambition to direct the fighting.

Mr Belousov joined the government in 2006 as a deputy economics minister. He began working closely with Mr Putin two years later, when he became director of the government's economics department. He was later a minister for economic development, a

presidential aide and, from 2020, a first deputy prime minister. He has a reputation for being one of Mr Putin's acolytes and seems to share the president's worldview. A devout Orthodox Christian, he suggests Russia should defend "traditional" social values.

He is known for his statist economic views and conviction that government intervention spurs growth. In 2018 he controversially promoted the introduction of windfall taxes on Russia's metals and chemical industries. Such ideas may appeal to Mr Putin as he gears Russia's economy towards the war; funding for the armed forces could reach \$120bn this year, a third of all government spending.

Mr Belousov was previously responsible for increasing Russia's production of drones. He also has strong links with officials in China, which has become a [crucial supplier](#) of parts to Russia's arms industry. Mr Putin probably wants a loyal official to quietly expand Russia's defence-industrial base as it tries to out-produce Ukraine and the West. Mr Belousov could be an ideal choice.



Weekly crossword

Our crossword is designed for experienced cruciverbalists and newcomers alike. Both sets of clues give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:

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

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.

May 18th edition

Cryptic clues

1 down Engineer tall turbine for high-speed vehicle (6,5)

1 across Slightly bashful storyteller backtracking around unknown country (6)

2 across Where to post videos of odd thicket (oak) (6)

3 across NATO in chaotic state (6)

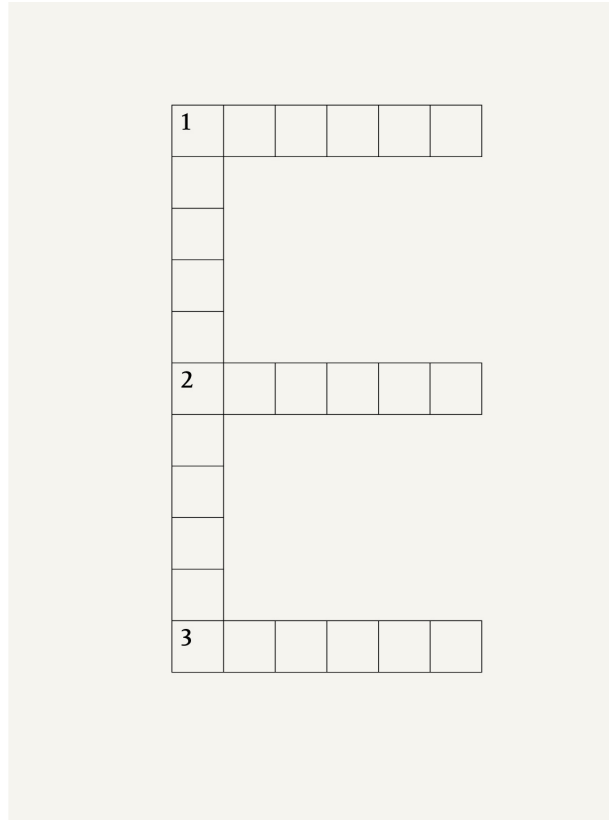
Factual clues

1 down What will one day run between Los Angeles and San Francisco (6,5)

1 across Country recently battered by torrential rains (6)

2 across An app which might soon be banned in America (6)

3 across What should be under threat for an American president to be granted emergency powers (6)



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:

Mary Lou Finlay, Toronto, Canada

Romano DePaoli, Naples, Italy

Jos  **Miguel Ried**, Santiago, Chile

They all gave the correct answers of Heath Ledger, Major Tom, Brown, May, and Lyndon Johnson. The theme is post-war British prime ministers: Edward Heath (1970-74), John Major (1990-97), Gordon Brown (2007-10), Theresa May (2016-19) and Boris Johnson (2019-22).

The questions were:

Monday: Who played the Joker in the Christopher Nolan film “The Dark Knight”?

Tuesday: Which astronaut was the central character in David Bowie’s song “Space Oddity”?

Wednesday: Which Ivy League university is based in Providence, Rhode Island?

Thursday: In which month do most European countries celebrate Labour day?

Friday: Robert Caro has so far written four volumes of biography of which historical figure?

Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.

Gustav Mahler