

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

President **Volodymyr Zelensky** said that “America’s silence, and the silence of others in the world, only encourages Putin” after **Russia** mounted its biggest drone-and-missile onslaught of the war so far on Ukrainian cities. At least 14 people were killed and dozens injured in a second consecutive night of attacks. Earlier Ukraine said that almost all of the citizens returned to it by Russia as part of a swap of 1,000 prisoners of war had been tortured, deprived of food and brainwashed.

Masayoshi Son, the [boss](#) of SoftBank, a Japanese tech giant, has reportedly proposed creating a joint **American-Japanese** sovereign wealth fund. According to the *Financial Times*, Mr Son has discussed the plan with Scott Bessent, America’s treasury secretary, and other senior officials. The fund would be jointly operated by the Treasury Department and the Japanese finance ministry and invest in technology and infrastructure across America.

The two rival candidates in **Poland’s** run-off presidential [election](#) on June 1st held big rallies in Warsaw. The capital’s mayor, Rafal Trzaskowski, a social liberal, led what he called a “March of Patriots”. His foe, the hard-right Karol Nawrocki, led a self-styled “March for Poland.” The two are neck-and-neck in the polls.

Syria’s new government promised to help **America** find and return its citizens who went missing during the Syrian civil war, which started in 2011—or their remains. It is another sign of thawing relations between the two countries. On Saturday American formally lifted economic sanctions imposed during the dictatorship of Bashar al-Assad.

North Korean authorities detained three people accused of being responsible for the botched launch on Wednesday of a new warship. All worked at the Chongjin shipyard where the vessel was built; one of those arrested was the yard's chief engineer. The accident happened when the ship tipped over; it is now lying on its side, mostly in the water, covered by a tarpaulin.

Pre-monsoon downpours led to severe flooding in **India's** capital, Delhi, in the north of the country, disrupting air and road traffic. On Saturday the **monsoon** itself had arrived in the south-western state of Kerala eight days earlier than expected. The rains, vital to Indian agriculture, started on their earliest date since 2009 and are expected to spread across the country by mid-July.

A major power outage in **Cannes** and the surrounding areas of south-eastern France was blamed on damage to an electrical substation by unknown saboteurs. Some events on the last day of the town's famous film festival were affected. But the closing ceremony, where "It Was Just an Accident", a film by a dissident Iranian director, was awarded the Palme d'Or, was able to proceed as usual.

Word of the week: Chessboxing, a hybrid sport where competitors alternate rounds of chess and boxing, winning by checkmate or knockout. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: EPA

France's strategy for the Indo-Pacific

Emmanuel Macron arrives in Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, on Sunday for the first stop of a three-country Asian tour. The French president will also go to Indonesia and then Singapore. On May 30th he will open the Shangri-La Dialogue, a regional forum. Amid tensions between America and China, France has been seeking to strengthen its position in the [Indo-Pacific](#) to amplify Europe's voice in the region.

As is usually the case on tour, Mr Macron will seek to seal business deals for French firms, including in defence and nuclear power. But he is also hoping to send a message, especially to young people. Many in the region accuse Europe of double standards, caring more about lives in Ukraine than in Gaza. Both places, Mr Macron will stress, deserve support. A long-time ally of Israel, France, along with Britain and Canada, has said that it is also committed to recognising a Palestinian state—a matter that has historically been high on Indonesia's foreign-policy agenda.



Photograph: Getty Images

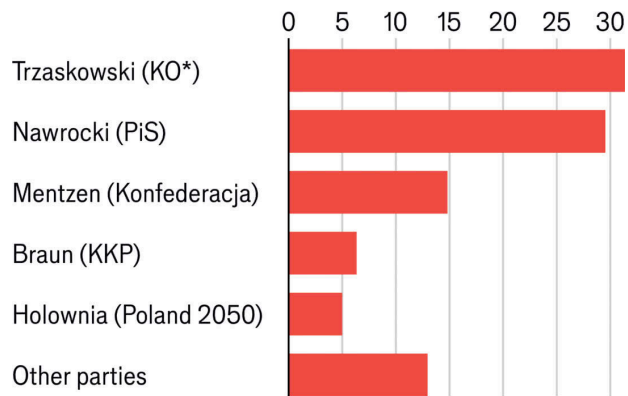
Populism punches back in Poland

Liberals watching Romania's presidential election last weekend breathed a sigh of relief when Nicusor Dan, the mayor of Bucharest, **unexpectedly defeated** his hard-right opponent. Turning their gaze to Poland, they gasped. In the first round of the presidential election on May 18th the ruling Civic Platform's Rafal Trzaskowski (pictured) was ahead of Karol Nawrocki, backed by the populist Law and Justice party, but by an **uncomfortably small margin** (see chart). He is no longer the firm favourite in the **run-off** on June 1st.

On Sunday they held competing rallies in Warsaw. Both candidates must mobilise their core voters. But they will also court the more than 21% who backed far-right candidates in the first round. That will be easier for Mr Nawrocki, who is expected to take part on Monday in a conference put on by CPAC, a conservative group with Trumpian ties. Mr Trzaskowski, meanwhile, needs to appeal to the right without putting off his left-wing supporters. Many in Poland **—and beyond—**will be holding their breath.

Narrowing leads

Poland, 2025 presidential election,
first-round vote share, %



*Civic Coalition: an alliance of Civic
Platform and smaller parties

Sources: National Electoral Commission; OECD

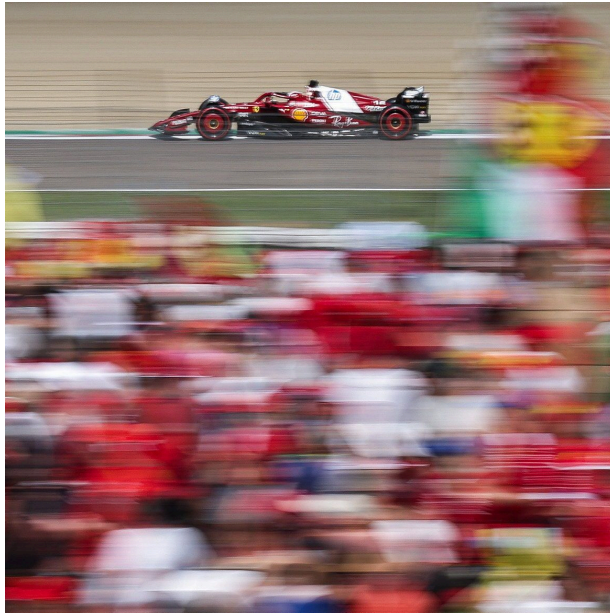


Photograph: Getty Images

Venezuela's next electoral farce

Ten months after a [fabricated presidential-election victory](#), Nicolás Maduro is summoning voters to the polls again, this time to elect governors, mayors and National Assembly representatives. Few are expected to heed the call. A clear majority voted to remove the autocrat from office last July, only for the sham electoral authority to declare him the winner.

The opposition leader, María Corina Machado, who is in hiding, has called for a boycott. The official result will exaggerate the turnout and probably give a few seats to opposition candidates who have agreed to take part. The most surreal part will be a vote in the “state” of Guayana Esequiba, an area encompassing two-thirds of the landmass of neighbouring Guyana, which the Maduro regime declared part of Venezuela in 2023. No one will be able to cast a ballot inside the territory. But the regime will declare victory anyway.



Photograph: Getty Images

Cultural churn at F1

Formula 1 drivers are an especially select group. There are only 20 seats on the grid for each race, putting pressure on teams to pick the right driver to withstand the heat of the Grand Prix. And the six drivers tackling this weekend's Monaco Grand Prix for the first time have additional reasons to be nervous.

So far in the 2025 season, teams have been unusually ruthless with their racers. Red Bull demoted Liam Lawson, a New Zealander, to their junior team after just two races, a move that was criticised by their four-time world champion, [Max Verstappen](#). Then another team, Alpine, swapped one relative novice, Jack Doohan, for another, Franco Colapinto, after six Grands Prix. Replacing drivers mid-season used to be highly unusual. Drivers were thought to need time to get used to the cars, tracks and rhythm of an F1 season. But now rookies, especially, seem to be evaluated on a race-by-race basis.



Illustration: The Economist

Weekly 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*:

Cryptic clues

1 across City's fashionable in the past (7)

2 across Wordsmith is gold deity (6)

3 across In the style of pale-sounding religious minority (7)

1 down Armchair play so confusing for president (5,9)

Factual clues

1 across American city apocryphally named for its “windbag” politicians (7)

2 across Novelist or originator of something (6)

3 across Member of a minority sect of Islam living chiefly in Syria (7)

1 down Latest leader to be ambushed at the White House (5,9)

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.

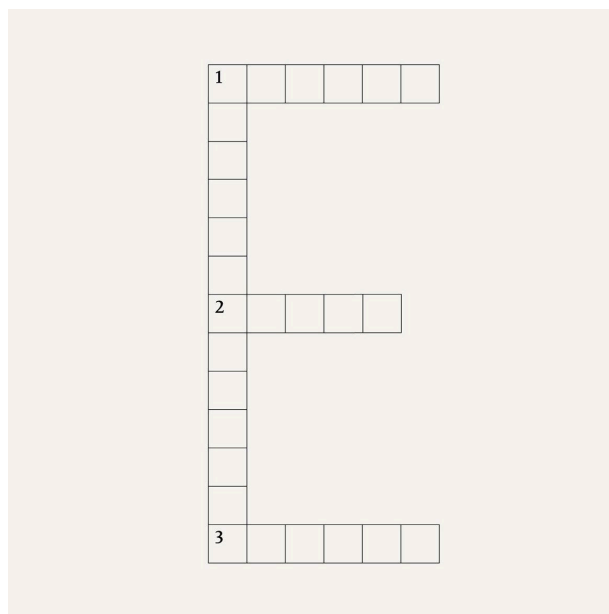


Image: .



The winners of this week's quiz

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

Felipe de Gamboa, Bogotá, Colombia

Susan Smolinsky, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, America

Corina Roeder, Oslo, Norway

They all gave the correct answers of: Doug Ross, Jackie Robinson, Marvin, Jackson Pollock and Wonder Boys. The theme is Motown artists: Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, the Jackson 5 (or Michael Jackson) and Stevie Wonder.

The questions were:

Monday: Which character did George Clooney play in *ER*?

Tuesday: Who was the first African-American to win the “most valuable player” award in Major League Baseball?

Wednesday: What was the name of the “paranoid android” in “The Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy” series?

Thursday: Which American painter was nicknamed “Jack the Dripper” for his style?

Friday: Which Michael Chabon novel was turned into a 2000 film starring Michael Douglas?

*The stupidity of men always
invites the insolence of power.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson