

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Around 9,000 people in **Gaza** need to be evacuated for lifesaving medical care abroad, the World Health Organisation said. In recent days there has been intense fighting around al-Shifa hospital, one of few in the enclave to remain somewhat open. Separately an official from America's State Department told Reuters that [famine](#) might already be "present" in some areas of northern Gaza.

Three UN observers and a translator were injured by a shell in southern **Lebanon**, drawing condemnation from António Guterres, the body's secretary-general. The group had been patrolling the "Blue Line", a buffer zone along the [Israel-Lebanon border](#). Lebanon said an Israeli drone had been responsible; Israel denied this.

AT&T said that personal information of 73m of its current and former customers had been posted on the dark web. The telecoms firm said that social-security numbers were among the data that were leaked. It said it did not yet know the source of the breach and that the information appeared to be from 2019 or before.

Turks headed to the polls for local elections. Much of the focus will be on the race to become mayor of Istanbul, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development (AK) party is looking to [win back control](#). That vote looks likely to go to the wire. Elsewhere AK is expected to mostly prevail.

Jerome Powell, the head of the **Federal Reserve**, said that he expects inflation to fall, just hours after the personal-consumption-expenditures index (the Fed's preferred measure of inflation) showed it had risen by 0.1 percentage points to 2.5% in February.

Mr Powell said that, though the road was “sometimes bumpy”, [inflation](#) was heading towards the central bank’s target of 2%.

Donald Tusk, **Poland’s** prime minister, said **Europe** is entering a “pre-war era” and urged European countries to increase defence spending. Mr Tusk also called for more military aid for Ukraine in its [war against Russia](#) saying the next two years would “decide everything”. The comments came days after Russia launched an aerial assault on Ukraine’s energy infrastructure. One missile briefly entered Polish airspace.

Cambridge University beat Oxford in both the women’s and the men’s annual **boat races**. Since 2000 Oxford has notched 13 wins in the men’s race, and Cambridge 11. One member of Oxford’s team said that some of his crew had suffered illness caused by E. coli. In recent days rowers had been warned against entering the River Thames after high levels of the bacteria were found in the water, linked to sewage discharges by [water utilities](#).

Word of the week: *Le dry January*, a phrase that has recently entered France’s national lexicon. [Read the full story](#).



Photo: EPA

Turkey’s not-so-local election in Istanbul

Most of the mayoral and municipal contests being held in Turkey's 81 provinces on Sunday are about things like public transport and sanitation. But in some, especially Istanbul, the future of the country's politics is at stake.

Ekrem Imamoglu won a shock victory five years ago and became Istanbul's mayor. He held a narrow lead in the pre-voting opinion polls. Another win and he'd be a shoo-in as the opposition's candidate in presidential elections in 2028. But Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey's president, and his Justice and Development party are determined to recapture Turkey's largest city, along with its \$16bn budget and vast patronage networks. If Justice and Development's mayoral candidate, Murat Kurum, wins it might also embolden Turkey's autocratic leader, who has ruled the country for over two decades, to pursue his latest pet project. Mr Erdogan wants a new constitution, presumably to give himself another term. Whoever said all politics is local was clearly not Turkish.



Photo: Getty Images

Ethiopia's tiger no longer roars

Not long ago Ethiopia's [tiger economy](#) enjoyed world-beating growth rates and significant reductions in poverty. No longer. In

December, it became the latest African country to default on a loan repayment—an aftershock of a devastating war in the Tigray region which ended in late 2022. With debt accumulating and foreign exchange reserves depleting, Ethiopian officials are racing to secure around \$3.5bn from the IMF before a deadline set by some of the country's creditors on March 31st.

If it lapses without cash from the fund, a deal to suspend debt payments until 2025 will be in jeopardy. So too might negotiations with commercial bondholders to reschedule a \$1bn loan due in December. Officials hope the IMF will give them the space to continue much-needed economic reforms, and unlock funding from the World Bank and other concessional lenders. The stakes are high: with much of the country still [mired in conflict](#), large parts are on [the brink of famine](#).



Photo: Getty Images

London's Tavistock paediatric gender clinic closes

The closure of one of Britain's most controversial clinics has been a drawn-out affair. The Gender Identity Development Service at the Tavistock foundation trust was once the world's largest children's gender clinic, offering puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. In 2020, amid criticism that its procedures were not evidence-based,

inspectors found the service “inadequate”. In 2022 an independent National Health Service review called for a “fundamentally different” approach, prioritising psychological treatment over medical intervention. The clinic will close on March 31st.

Two regional services will replace it, with more planned—but their capacity will probably be insufficient to reduce the waiting list of 6,000. Controversy will continue. On March 12th the NHS said it would ban puberty blockers for children under 18. But it is expanding access to cross-sex hormones for adults and announced on March 21st, to widespread surprise, that children will be able to take them, too, from “around their 16th birthday”, even without having first taken puberty blockers.



Photo: Lea Mok/HKFP

A beloved bookshop closes in Hong Kong

A slogan runs above the entrance of Mount Zero, an independent bookshop: “ideas are bulletproof”. Maybe, but in Hong Kong they are certainly targets. Since the government in Beijing enacted a national-security law in 2020, many independent bookshops associated with pro-democracy movements have closed. Mount Zero, which shuts this week, is the latest.

Texts that might rile the government, for instance on pro-democracy protests in 2019, have disappeared from shelves since the NSL was introduced. (Hong Kong passed its own version of the law on March 19th.) In 2022 five speech therapists were jailed under a colonial-era sedition law for publishing a children's book about wolves and sheep.

Sources claim the authorities sometimes heap legal challenges on shops to close them down. Mount Zero, which has sometimes been associated with the pro-democracy movement, received such treatment. It was told its front step was illegally occupying government land in September. Being bulletproof doesn't protect you from everything.



Photo: Getty Images

Weekend profile: Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi's detained anti-corruption crusader

Arvind Kejriwal claims to be the victim of a stitch-up. On March 21st Delhi's chief minister and the leader of India's opposition Aam Aadmi Party, which runs the capital and the northern state of Punjab, [was arrested](#) for allegedly failing to co-operate with an

investigation into kickbacks the AAP supposedly received for alcohol licences.

Mr. Kejriwal protests, arguably with good cause, that Narendra Modi, the prime minister, and his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party are going after him to distract from their own corrupt practice of systematically investigating political opponents. (The BJP denied doing this.) On Saturday supporters of the INDIA Alliance, a 27-party bloc opposed to the BJP, will take to Delhi's streets to demand Mr Kejriwal's release. They want to make sure that one of their most popular leaders is allowed to campaign in India's general election, which starts on April 19th.

It would be grimly ironic if Mr Kejriwal lost his role in public life because of graft allegations. An engineer-turned-civil servant from northern India, the 55-year-old rose to prominence as a rabble-rousing campaigner leading a popular movement against endemic corruption during the Congress-led government that preceded Mr Modi. He founded the AAP on this image. The party's symbol is a broom—symbolising its commitment to sweeping away corruption.

Mr Kejriwal built a reputation for good governance in his ten years-plus as chief minister of Delhi, despite constant attempts by the central government to undermine his administration. Aided by his deputy, Manish Sisodia, who has been in jail since last February in connection with the same investigation that has ensnared his boss, Mr Kejriwal turned the capital's failing education system around. It is now regarded as one of the country's best. He also improved health care, particularly for Delhi's poorest.

His anti-graft credentials have made Mr Kejriwal a thorn in the side of Mr Modi, who is loth to see an opponent project an aura of incorruptibility. The BJP has also stepped up its hounding of other parts of the opposition, as the election draws closer. Mr Modi has had success painting politicians from the long-established Congress Party—with which Mr Kejriwal's party has allied—as corrupt,

elitist and out of touch. Mr Kejriwal, a conservative, technocratic upstart, is harder to tar with the same brush.



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:

Rik Mulder, Hilversum, The Netherlands

Tetsuyuki Maruyama, Ito, Japan

Emil Skodon, Washington DC, America

They all gave the correct answers of Joseph Smith, sunset clause, The Phantom Menace, the Orient Express, and cats. The theme is Andrew Lloyd Webber musicals: Joseph and the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, Sunset Boulevard, The Phantom of the Opera, Starlight Express and Cats.

The questions were:

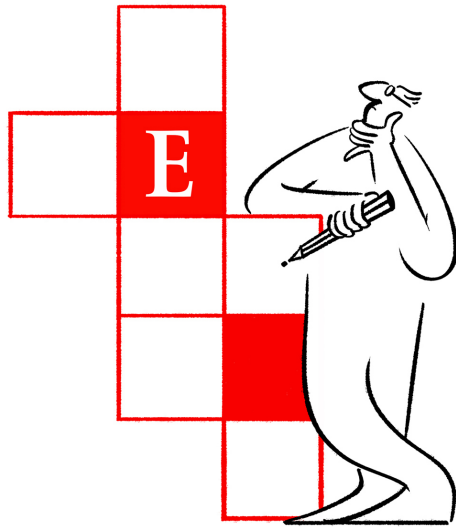
Monday: Who was the founder of Mormonism? He published the Book of Mormon in 1830

Tuesday: What is the usual term for a provision in a bill that provides for a law to expire after a certain date?

Wednesday: What was the name of the first prequel in the Star Wars movie series, released in 1999?

Thursday: What was the name of the luxury train service that ran from Paris to Istanbul?

Friday: Abyssinian, Burmese and Persian are all types of which creature?



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* Awful cataract in unforgiving location (10)

1 *across* Saying a bit of Dickens takes a long time (5)

2 *across* Hazard in bazaar is known (4)

3 *across* Almost completely inadequate record (5)

Factual clues

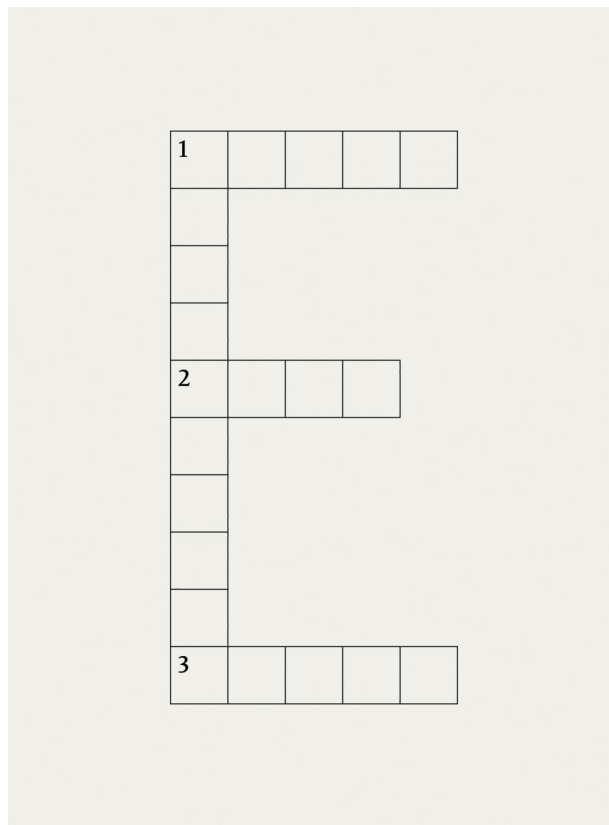
1 *down* Earth's largest refrigerator (10)

1 *across* What “all models are wrong” might be for statisticians (5)

2 *across* What Europe is trying to minimise from China (4)

3 *across* Beyoncé's “Cowboy Carter”, for example (5)

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.



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