

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

President Joe Biden issued an unambiguous rebuke of the **International Criminal Court's** application seeking arrest warrants for **Binyamin Netanyahu**, Israel's [prime minister](#), and **Yahya Sinwar**, [Hamas's](#) leader. Calling the effort "outrageous", Mr Biden said that there was "no equivalence" between Israel and Hamas. The court's [chief prosecutor](#) said there was evidence that both men bore responsibility for war crimes, citing Hamas's attacks on Israel on October 7th and Israel's subsequent invasion of Gaza. The warrants will be issued subject to the approval of the ICC's judges.

Iran's state media confirmed the death of **Ebrahim Raisi**, the country's president. [Mr Raisi's](#) helicopter crashed on Sunday in the country's mountainous north-west as it returned from a visit to the border with Azerbaijan. Officials blamed bad weather. The president was travelling with Hossein Amirabdollahian, Iran's foreign minister, who also died. The loss of the president is likely to spark a [high-stakes power struggle](#).

Donald Trump called the judge overseeing his hush-money trial "a tyrant" after the judge reprimanded the defence's witness. "You don't say 'jeez'", he scolded Robert Costello, a lawyer whose testimony sought to paint Michael Cohen as a liar. [Mr Cohen testified](#) that Mr Trump directed him to pay off a porn star. The prosecution rested its case on Monday; a verdict could come next week.

The price of **copper** extended its dramatic rally, rising to a record high of \$11,105 per ton at the London Metal Exchange. The price of the [metal](#) has surged by 28% since the beginning of 2024.

Demand for copper is widely expected to be strong in the coming years, bolstered by investments in power-hungry data centres and green energy.

South Africa's Constitutional Court barred **Jacob Zuma** from running in the general election on May 29th. The country's constitution bans anyone sentenced to prison for more than a year from running for parliament. [Mr Zuma](#) was jailed in 2021 for failing to appear before an inquiry into corruption that took place during his nine-year stint as South Africa's president.

A British court granted **Julian Assange**, the co-founder of **WikiLeaks**, the right to launch a fresh appeal against [efforts to extradite him](#) to America. Mr Assange faces 18 charges relating to computer hacking and publishing secret documents in 2010. The High Court in London ruled that American assurances regarding Mr Assange's rights during trial did not preclude his right to appeal.

OpenAI said it would remove one of the voices used by **ChatGPT** after users compared it to that of [Scarlett Johansson](#), who voiced a virtual assistant in "Her", a 2013 film. OpenAI recently added the voice function, which reads responses aloud to users of its chatbot. The company said that the voice was not intended as an "imitation" of Ms Johansson.

Figure of the day: 56,000. The number of cancer lawsuits Bayer still faces over its weedkiller. It has settled more than 110,000 claims. [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: ROPI

Zelensky's term ends

Volodymyr Zelensky has had a testing first term as president of Ukraine. First came the crisis of Donald Trump and “Ukrainegate”. Then covid-19 hit. And then came Russia’s terrifying full-scale invasion, since when Ukraine has been under martial law. But Mr Zelensky may soon face his biggest political challenge yet. His [term ends on Monday](#) and he will struggle to refresh his mandate with no obvious possibility of elections.

Ukraine’s constitution is confusing. Article 103 states that the president is elected for a five-year term; but Article 108 says that he or she exercises power until a new president is inaugurated. And elections are forbidden during martial law.

The mood in Kyiv is increasingly angsty. War fatigue and a steady drip of headlines about corruption are eroding public support. Recent polling shows that trust in the presidency has fallen from a net positive of 71% in 2023 to 26%. As problems worsen on the front lines, Mr Zelensky’s legitimacy problems will almost certainly intensify.



Photo: AP

Taiwan's new president takes office

On Monday Taiwan inaugurated a new president: [William Lai Ching-te](#). The Chinese Communist Party dislikes Mr Lai, who once called himself a “pragmatic worker for Taiwan independence”. In recent weeks the CCP has [ramped up military drills](#) near the island

and coastguard patrols around Taiwan's outlying Kinmen archipelago. At the same time, Chinese officials have met legislators from Taiwan's opposition party and discussed reopening some cross-strait tourism.

China is signalling that it is open to lowering tensions if Mr Lai affirms that Taiwan is part of China. Mr Lai must “make a clear choice between peaceful development or confrontation across the Taiwan Strait”, and should take a stance on cross-strait relations in his inaugural speech, says the spokesman of China's Taiwan Affairs Office. Mr Lai wants to lower tensions too—but not on China's conditions. His speech will probably underscore that. China will keep the pressure on.



Photo: Getty Images

What now for Iran?

On Monday Iranian state media confirmed that the country's president, Ebrahim Raisi, was [killed in a helicopter crash](#) on the previous day. What does that mean for Iran?

A likely consequence will be a power struggle. Although the president is subordinate to Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader, Mr

Raisi was considered by many to be a possible successor to the ageing cleric.

An internal battle would come just as Iran is fighting a regional war, both by direct action and via its network of proxies. The death of the president also comes at a point of mounting economic gloom, and when America and its allies are mulling the tightening of sanctions.

Even if chaos ensues, few Iranians will mourn Mr Raisi. They will remember him as the “hanging judge”, a deputy prosecutor in Tehran who helped send thousands of political prisoners to the gallows in 1988. His hapless running of the economy has also impoverished many. The regime, though, will be nervous.



Photo: Getty Images

Biden and Trump do their book-keeping

Election watchers will get an update on how [Joe Biden](#) and [Donald Trump](#) are doing in the funding race when the two campaigns file their monthly finance reports on Monday. At the last count, Mr Biden was in the lead. By last month's deadline, he had raised almost \$160m, compared with his rival's \$114m. And more people

had donated to the president in battleground states by the end of March than had done so by the same date in 2020.

Mr Trump has so far failed to live up to his performance four years ago. His coffers will get a boost from a fundraising dinner in April at which the former president raked in \$50m. But he also has expenses that Mr Biden does not—fighting multiple court cases is costly. Perhaps that is why on Friday, granted a rare day off from his [hush-money trial](#) to attend his son's graduation in Florida, he also squeezed in a fundraising dinner—in Minnesota.



Photo: Getty Images

The future of European football

The annual tournament for Europe's brightest [football talent](#) begins in Cyprus on Monday. The Under-17 European Championships has been running since 1982. Its most successful teams have been Europe's big beasts—Spain, Portugal and Germany have won half of the 39 editions. Young players tend to be attached to the academies of leading teams from their home countries. Spain's whole squad is signed to domestic teams, as are all the German and French players.

In the England squad, one defender stands out: Christian McFarlane, of New York City FC. Born in Essex, he moved to America at the age of three and learned the game stateside. That goes against the traditional direction of travel: ageing [English footballers](#) had once gone to America to earn a final payday in a weaker league. But American soccer academies have professionalised. In the 2023/24 season, 24 Americans played in the big five European leagues.



Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Monday: Which stuffed toy is named after the 26th US President?

In diving to the bottom of pleasure we bring up more gravel than pearls.

Honor  *de Balzac*