

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Volodymyr Zelensky said that **Russia** is trying to create a “general impression” of an Easter [ceasefire](#) but is still attacking Ukraine. He accused Vladimir Putin of failing to make a “genuine move” towards ending the war. On Sunday morning Ukraine detected around 60 shelling attacks. Mr Zelensky said that Ukrainian troops would continue to respond to Russian attacks “symmetrically”.

Israel said on Sunday that its killing of 15 aid workers in Gaza on March 23rd was due to an “operational misunderstanding”. The finding comes from an inquiry conducted by the Israel Defence Forces. The IDF fired the deputy commander of the battalion responsible for the killings. On Saturday **Binyamin Netanyahu** said that **Israel** had “no choice” but to continue fighting in Gaza.

An affiliate of **al-Qaeda** said it killed 70 soldiers in an attack on two military outposts in northern **Benin**. The reports have not been independently verified. Groups linked to al-Qaeda and Islamic State have recently carried out several attacks in Benin and its neighbour, Togo. Jihadists have gained ground in the area, which is near the [Sahel](#).

Pope Francis met [J.D. Vance](#), America’s vice-president, for a “brief” discussion in the Vatican. The pontiff has criticised the Trump administration’s immigration policies. Earlier on Easter Sunday Francis greeted worshippers from the balcony of St Peter’s basilica. Last month he was discharged from hospital, where he was treated for pneumonia.

Justice Samuel Alito dissented from the Supreme Court’s decision to block the Trump administration from [deporting](#) Venezuelan detainees in Texas. He called the ruling “unprecedented and legally

questionable”. The pause followed an appeal by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union, a legal advocacy group. Mr Trump had used a 1798 law to expel suspected gang members.

Thousands of people took to the streets in cities across **America** to protest against **Donald Trump’s** policies. More than 400 rallies, mostly organised by a group called 50501, took place. Similar anti-Trump protests took place on April 5th. 50501 describes itself as a “pro-democracy, pro-constitution, anti-executive overreach, nonviolent grassroots movement”.

Harvard said it took seriously a government letter demanding oversight of the university’s affairs, despite reports from the *New York Times* it may have been sent in error. The letter, signed by federal officials, [sparked a clash](#): the government has frozen \$2.2bn in grants, questioned Harvard’s tax-exempt status and threatened to withdraw its eligibility to receive foreign students. The university vowed not to “surrender” its independence.

Word of the week: *Niuma*, meaning “beasts of burden”, the term Chinese tech workers use to refer to themselves. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

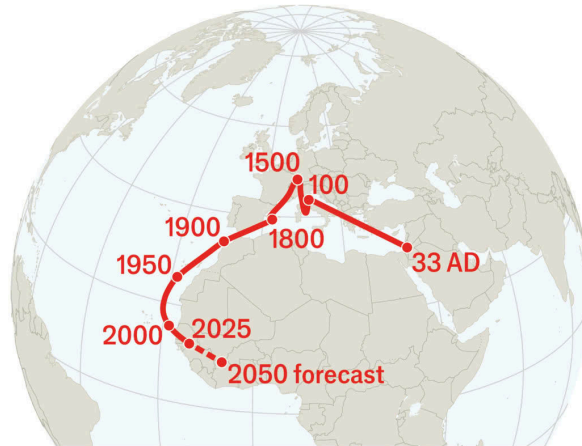
The Catholic church's centre of gravity

It is the most sacred week in the Christian calendar. Tens of thousands of [Catholics](#) will descend on Vatican City for Easter Sunday. This year's celebrations carry added significance as part of the Jubilee Year, during which the Vatican expects more than 32m pilgrims to visit Rome—reaffirming the city's central role in Catholicism.

Yet the centre of Catholicism is shifting. According to research from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, an American evangelical institute, the Catholics' demographic centre—the point at which equal numbers of Catholics live to the north, south, east, and west—is now somewhere around Senegal's southern border. By 2050, it is projected to move further to the south-east. Catholic populations are growing faster in Africa and Asia than in any other part of the world. Church leadership increasingly reflects this demographic shift. Although Rome remains the centre of power in the Church, the heart of the faith is moving elsewhere.

Mass migration

Catholic centre of gravity*



*Location of where equal numbers of Catholics live to the north, south, east and west. On modern borders

Source: World Christian Database



Photograph: Getty Images

Easter bells and air-raid sirens

This Sunday is the fourth Orthodox Easter since Russia invaded Ukraine. As the bells ring out over Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, the residents will be watching anxiously to see if the 30-hour ceasefire announced on Saturday by Vladimir Putin turns out to be real. Even if there is a short pause in Russian attacks, there will be deep scepticism about Mr Putin's interest in peace.

On Palm Sunday last weekend, a “double-tap” strike by ballistic missiles carrying cluster munitions killed 35 people and badly injured over 100 more in the town of Sumy. Many of the victims were on their way to church. Soon after, in an interview, President Volodymyr Zelensky said that he would like to buy ten Patriot batteries from America for \$15bn. “We will find the money,” he said. The following day Donald Trump, who had earlier dismissed the Sumy atrocity as “a mistake”, derided the request. Mr Trump appears to think that arming Ukraine undermines his attempt to impose a ceasefire. Mr Putin may hope to get in his good books.



Photograph: Getty Images

Can AI test policy?

Economists and social scientists try to understand how policy interventions can change our behaviour and, with it, the world. To do so they carry out surveys among small groups of people, before deciding whether to enact them on larger ones. But this is expensive. Participants need to be recruited, prepared and often paid.

The generative-AI revolution, powered by [large language models](#), could provide a solution, say researchers at the University of Illinois at Chicago. LLMS synthesise vast volumes of human knowledge and behaviour in their human-like outputs. That human mimicry could act as a useful proxy in field studies. Given the conclusions from 319 famous economic experiments, alongside incorrect answers designed to throw it off, ChatGPT is able to correctly guess the outcome of experiments 78% of the time, the researchers found. That might open up future opportunities to test policy plans through AI. It may not be long before in silico simulations take off.



Photograph: Amazon Prime

A laugh-out-loud success

Producers of reality television are always on the hunt for new “formats”: catchy ideas they can license to other countries. Cooking competitions such as “MasterChef” and “Bake Off” are produced around the world. “The Masked Singer”—in which celebrities perform in elaborate disguises—originated in South Korea but is now produced in some 30 countries.

The latest hit is “[LOL: Last One Laughing](#)”. Ten comedians are locked in a room for several hours and the one who keeps a straight face the longest wins. There have been more than 25 versions and 70 seasons of the show; this week it returned with new material in Colombia, France and Germany.

What makes “LOL” unusual is its genre: comedy rarely goes global; what people find funny varies from place to place. Yet “LOL” has made a virtue of that by bringing together the best-known jokesters in each country and pitting them against each other. Amazon, the streamer behind the franchise, is laughing all the way to the bank.

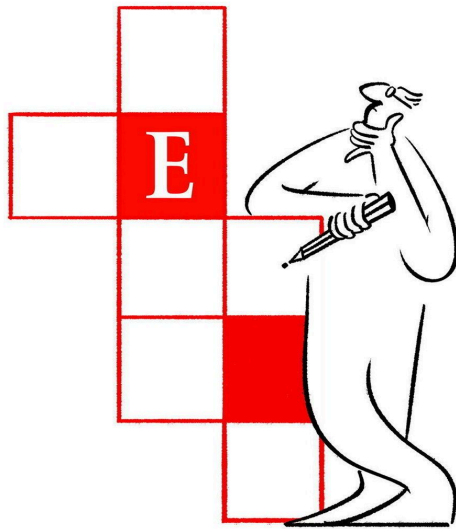


Illustration: The Economist

This week's crossword

Cryptic clues

- 1 down* What's up? Erm, a riotous mid game franchise (5,5)
- 1 across* Soup starter with French bread is popular with tourists (5)
- 2 across* More troubled capital (4)
- 3 across* Small business gets an instrument (5)

Factual clues

- 1 down* Game franchise whose success at the box office is being emulated by "A Minecraft Movie" (5,5)
- 1 across* European country where business is thriving while bigger economies stall (5)
- 2 across* Home of the majority of popes (4)
- 3 across* Part of the body where microplastics have been found (5)

We now publish our mini crossword, with a choice of straight or cryptic clues based on the headlines, twice a week. Try the [latest puzzle](#). And check back on Saturday for another challenge.

1				
2				
3				

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:

Nedko Kyuchukov, London, Britain

Astrid Ahlgren, Ottawa, Canada

Ulf Brüggemann, Berlin, Germany

They all gave the correct answers of Laurie Lee, The Meg, Jo Nesbo, Amy Winehouse and Beth Mead. The theme is characters from Little Women: Laurie (who marries Amy) and the sisters Meg, Jo, Amy and Beth.

The questions were:

Monday: Which English poet wrote the memoirs “Cider with Rosie” and “As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning”?

Tuesday: Which 2018 movie saw Jason Statham fighting a giant prehistoric shark?

Wednesday: Which Norwegian author writes thrillers featuring the detective Harry Hole?

Thursday: The 2024 film “Back To Black” was a biopic of which singer?

Friday: Which footballer won the “golden boot” in the women’s 2022 Euro tournament?

*Always laugh when you can, it is
cheap medicine.*

Lord Byron