

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Vladimir Putin declared a unilateral Easter [ceasefire](#) in Ukraine, ordering a halt to all Russian military activity for 30 hours from 6pm Moscow time on Saturday. He cited humanitarian reasons and said troops should stand ready to repel any provocations. Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, was sceptical, accusing Mr Putin of "yet another attempt...to play with human lives". Separately, Russia and Ukraine carried out the largest prisoner swap of the war so far, with 277 Ukrainians freed.

America's Supreme Court temporarily blocked the Trump administration from [deporting](#) a group of Venezuelan detainees in Texas, implying a lack of due process. The pause followed an appeal by lawyers from the American Civil Liberties Union, a legal advocacy group, which said some of them were already en route to deportation. Mr Trump has used a 1798 law to expel suspected gang members.

Iran and **America** ended a second round of [nuclear talks](#) in Rome and agreed to meet again next week. Oman mediated the talks. America wants Iran to halt uranium enrichment. Iran, which insists its programme is peaceful, demands sanctions relief and guarantees from America that it will not walk away from any new deal, as it did when Mr Trump withdrew from an agreement in 2018.

Mr Trump and Sir Keir Starmer, **Britain's** prime minister, discussed "ongoing and productive" **trade talks** between America and Britain. It was their first conversation since Mr Trump's announcement of "reciprocal" tariffs, which included a 10% levy on British goods. Earlier this week J.D. Vance, America's vice-president, said there was a "good chance" that his country could agree a trade deal with [Britain](#).

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.

A **Tunisian court** sentenced opposition leaders, lawyers and businessmen to between 13 and 66 years in jail for allegedly conspiring to overthrow the government. The opposition calls the case fabricated and a sign of the authoritarianism of the president, Kais Saied. Mr Saied dissolved parliament in 2021 and now governs by decree. According to state media, over 20 of the 40 charged had fled abroad.

American regulators approved **Capital One's** [acquisition](#) of **Discover**. The \$35bn merger of two of the country's largest credit-card firms, announced last year, was scrutinised by former President Joe Biden's administration, which favoured stricter bank-merger rules. As part of the agreement Capital One must pay a \$100m fine imposed by the Federal Reserve against Discover for overcharging interchange fees between 2007 and 2023.

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



Photograph: EPA

Another round of nuclear talks

Envoys from America and Iran will meet on Saturday, this time in Rome, for their second round of [nuclear](#) talks in a week. The hope is that these negotiations will be more substantive than the first ones held in Oman. “We don’t have much time,” said Rafael Grossi, the head of the UN’s nuclear agency, on a visit to Tehran on Thursday.

On Monday [Steve Witkoff](#), the American negotiator, suggested that any deal would allow Iran to continue enriching uranium to 3.67% purity. It sounded as if he was pursuing an agreement similar to the one [Donald Trump abandoned](#) in 2018. But the next day he changed his tune: in a statement, he said Iran must “stop and eliminate” its enrichment programme. The about-face came under pressure from hawks in Washington, who were unhappy to hear him concede on zero enrichment. Iran’s foreign minister replied that enrichment was “not negotiable”. [Time is short](#)—and the path to a deal is complicated.



Photograph: Alamy

China's robotics sprint

China's government often tries to dazzle the world with futuristic displays of technological prowess. One such attempt took place on Saturday morning local time, when [robot runners](#) took on humans around a track on the outskirts of Beijing. Organisers say it is the world's first humanoid half-marathon.

The race is a bit of a gimmick, but the competition for supremacy in the humanoid robotics industry is hugely important. The still-nascent sector could be worth more than \$200bn in ten years, and as many as 3bn robots could be walking among us by 2060, according to forecasts from Goldman Sachs and Bank of America. China, not America, seems to be pulling ahead: many of the parts for humanoid robots are already found in China's electric-vehicle supply chain. Which country ultimately wins may come down to who harnesses data better and produces superior components, such as semiconductors. It is a marathon, not a sprint. (And a human won it.)



Photograph: Getty Images

America's left takes to the streets

On Saturday Americans angry with President Donald Trump will again take to the streets to vent their displeasure. The demonstrations are loosely organised by 50501, a group forged on Reddit earlier this year. (The name refers to 50 protests in 50 states on one day.) Expect plenty of colourful signs with insults intended for the president and his allies. Elon Musk is a favourite target: picket lines are planned at Tesla dealerships across the country.

These wide-ranging rallies—one in Scranton, Pennsylvania calls for the “restoration of our rights to health, peace, and justice”—underscore the frustration felt by many opponents of the president. Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, prominent left-wing members of Congress, are trying to focus minds around “fighting oligarchy”. Yet when protesters at [one such rally in Los Angeles](#) were asked what they were worried about, the most common reply was: “Everything”. A broad anti-Trump message may be enough to unite Democrats for now, but sooner or later they will have to decide not just what they are against—but what they are for.



Photograph: Getty Images

Australia's top young sprinters go head to head

Gout Gout, an Australian sprinter (pictured), was just 14 years old when he went viral online for running 100m in under 10.6 seconds. Now aged 17, he took home the 200m title at the national championships in Perth this month.

His Australian competition is heating up. During his heat in Perth, Lachlan Kennedy ran the second-fastest 100m by an Australian in history. He was almost as quick in the final, but was beaten by 27-year-old Rohan Browning, another highly rated runner who has since been set back by injury.

This weekend Mr Gout faces Mr Kennedy at the Stawell Gift in Victoria, a 120m race that carries the biggest prize in Australian athletics. Spectators should expect Mr Gout and Mr Kennedy to run modest times on the grass track. But the race will set both men up for the biggest test of their careers: the World Championships in Tokyo in September.



Photograph: Alamy

Weekend profile: Alexandre de Moraes, the Brazilian judge who would rule the internet

Alexandre de Moraes divides opinion. Elon Musk calls the Brazilian supreme court judge “Darth Vader” in tribute to his black cape and high, shiny forehead. To campaigners for restrictions on digital speech, Mr Moraes is a superstar. Fans in Brazil call him Xandão, “Big Alex”.

Only in Brazil, which endows its Federal Supreme Court (STF) with [extreme power](#), could a judge be so prominent. As guardians of Brazil’s prolix constitution, STF judges often rule on matters which in most places are the remit of elected officials. Because of the caseload this creates, the STF allows judges to make consequential decisions individually, giving each judge enormous visibility. Yet no other STF judge has a public profile to compare with Mr Moraes’.

Mr Moraes’ concern with online speech took root in 2018, when Jair Bolsonaro was elected president. During the campaign, Mr Bolsonaro had praised Brazil’s former military dictatorship and

attacked institutions that might check his power. Threats against the STF intensified after he took office. Mr Moraes recalls an anonymous post detailing the travel plans of an STF judge and urging people to stab him. The STF opened a “fake-news inquiry” in March 2019, to investigate online content that could jeopardise its judges’ safety. Mr Moraes was put in charge.

He has since suspended hundreds of social-media accounts. In 2024 [he blocked X](#), Mr Musk’s social-media platform, for more than a month, and froze the bank accounts of Starlink, Mr Musk’s satellite-internet company, angering the American right. One might expect a judge in MAGA’s cross-hairs to be left-wing. But Mr Moraes, a former justice minister who calls himself a “classical liberal”, has only ever worked for centre-right politicians. A more plausible explanation for his campaign is this: it’s personal. He receives constant death threats, which seem to invigorate him, and have given his rulings an absolutist edge.

The gusto with which he has deployed his mandate has sometimes been alarming. In 2022, a newspaper published the private messages of some Bolsonarista businessmen; one wrote, “I prefer a coup to the return of [the left-wing Workers’ Party]”. Mr Moraes ordered police to raid the mens’ homes, blocked their bank accounts and shut down their social-media pages. He stopped investigating six of the eight businessmen after a public backlash.

Mr Moraes says that Brazil is “in the vanguard” when it comes to taming social media. “A new extremist digital populism has emerged, led by the extreme right,” he says. He believes that if social media are not checked, “you will get a dictatorship here, a dictatorship there, extremism, the return of fascism.”

Mr Bolsonaro [may go to prison this year](#). His trial begins soon. If he is jailed, Brazilian tolerance for Mr Moraes’s heavy hand may wane. “When the wheel turns”, says a prominent left-wing

intellectual—meaning when a domineering judge with different views sits on the almighty STF—“I could be sent to jail.”



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 down* What's up? Erm, a riotous game franchise is included (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)

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.

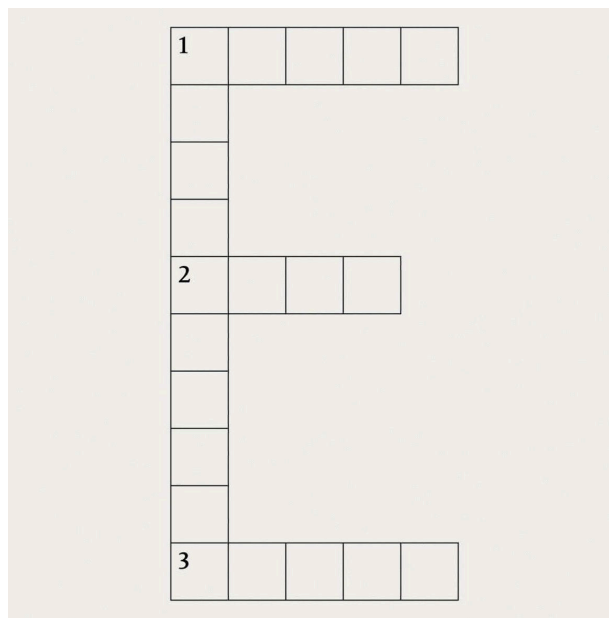


Image: The Economist



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