

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

**Volodymyr Zelensky** said that he will meet **Donald Trump** in Washington, DC on Monday. On Saturday morning Ukraine's president also spoke to his American counterpart, along with European leaders, for more than an hour after Mr Trump held [peace talks](#) with Vladimir Putin in Alaska the day before. Mr Trump said the meeting was "productive" but that there is "no deal until there's a deal".

Under pressure from a federal judge, America's Justice Department retracted its move to replace Pamela Smith, police chief in **Washington, DC**, with an "emergency police commissioner". City officials had decried the move as a "baseless power grab" not authorised by the Home Rule Act, the law that Mr Trump [invoked on Monday](#) to place the capital's police department under federal control.

Naim Qassem, the leader of **Hizbullah**, said the Iranian-backed militia was prepared to fight against [efforts to disarm it](#). Last week, the new Lebanese government approved an American-backed disarmament plan for it to begin seizing the militia's weapons. Hizbullah was severely weakened during its war with Israel last year and until now has done little to defend its weapons.

The **World Economic Forum**, which runs an annual gabfest in Davos, Switzerland, cleared Klaus Schwab of “material wrongdoing”. The organisation’s founder stepped down from the board in April after whistleblowers accused him and his wife of misusing funds. The WEF named [Larry Fink](#), the boss of BlackRock, the world’s biggest asset manager, and André Hoffman, vice-chairman of Roche, a Swiss drugmaker, as interim chairs of the board.

Flash floods and landslides killed more than 300 people in **Pakistan** and Pakistan-administered **Kashmir**. The disasters were caused by cloudbursts, sudden downpours which are common during monsoon season. Authorities have declared several disaster zones and said they expect heavy rainfall to continue until August 21st. Earlier this week, flooding killed at least 60 people in a part of Kashmir controlled by India.

**BlackRock** agreed on an \$11bn deal with Saudi Aramco to lease natural-gas processing facilities. Officials at **Saudi Arabia’s** state-owned oil giant said the deal highlighted the firm’s attractiveness to foreign investors. Saudi Arabia is under growing fiscal strain and has been [trying to attract foreign capital](#). Still, it has struggled to garner interest outside its energy sector.

International talks to control **plastic pollution** failed to produce an agreement. Representatives from 184 countries discussed several draft treaties at the UN-backed meeting, but disagreements over curbs on production and controls on toxic chemicals created an impasse. Officials from the European Union, however, said the talks, the sixth round of negotiations since 2022, would provide a good basis for another meeting.

**Word of the week:** Vereine, the colourful clubs and associations that are the backbone of German society. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: AP

## Russia's untimely advance

In recent days Russia has managed to breach part of Ukraine's front line in the eastern Donetsk region. The timing was probably not a coincidence: ahead of [Vladimir Putin's summit](#) on Friday with Donald Trump, it bolstered the Russian president's narrative that he is winning the war.

But the [war grinds on](#), and talk of a significant Russian breakthrough is premature. Russian forces are employing the same tactic they have been using all summer: shelling and bombing Ukrainian lines then exploiting the gap with small sabotage and reconnaissance groups. Ukraine claims that two such groups have been destroyed, while a third has yet to be cleared. Russia's progress is never quick, and its losses are high. It does not yet appear to control the breakout area, which is just north of Pokrovsk, a logistically important town that Russia has been trying to seize for a year. Mr Putin is in no hurry to end the war.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Robots get competitive

This weekend, at the World Humanoid Robot Games in Beijing, spectators may be more enthralled by machines playing five-on-five football than they have ever been by China's men's team. The games will see more than 500 humanoid robots from 16 countries compete in a variety of sports. The opening ceremonies featured boxing displays, a parade and choreographed dance routines (their human co-performers had more verve, but the robots were impressively synchronised).

China hopes to lead the world in robotics, and [so far it is winning](#): of the 60 or so listed makers of robotic eyes (ie, cameras and sensors) and hands, muscles and joints, 48 are Chinese. The robot-makers enjoy backing from the Communist Party and a well-oiled supply chain. Eventually, however, as the state pours investment into humanoids, they must also find a market for these devices. That does not yet exist, even if the bots can play a decent match of footy.



Photograph: Reuters

## The shadow over football's biggest league

Liverpool Football Club won last season's English Premier League at a canter. That surprised many pundits, and the sport's increasingly data-loving fans, because the club had made barely any signings in the summer transfer window. Yet ahead of this year's season, which starts this weekend, the champions have changed tack. So far Liverpool have spent around £290m (\$340m) on players, a total that could yet rise. Arsenal, runners-up last year, have also splashed the cash on stars such as Viktor Gyokeres, a highly rated Swedish striker.

Still, scandal off the pitch may define the season. An independent commission is investigating whether Manchester City, who have won six out of the past eight EPL titles, broke the competition's financial rules between 2009 and 2018 (the club denies the 115 charges). A verdict was expected in spring, but didn't arrive. The league has said it doesn't know when the commission's findings will be made public. The competition's credibility is on the line.



Photograph: Granger/Shutterstock

## Woody Guthrie's lasting influence

When [Bob Dylan](#) moved to New York in 1961, he modelled himself on Woody Guthrie. The Oklahoma-born musician was the founding father of the modern American folk scene: a writer, adapter and performer of classic songs. By the time of Mr Dylan's arrival on the scene, Guthrie had stopped performing owing to a lengthy struggle with Huntington's disease, which led to his death aged just 55 in 1967.

In his final years of health, Guthrie made home recordings in Brooklyn on a stereo tape recorder given to him by his publisher, Howie Richmond. Now producers have unearthed and remastered the songs for a new collection released this week. For fans, "Woody at Home" provides the first opportunity to hear Guthrie's recordings of many of the songs. Equally revealing are his spoken messages to Richmond, which show perhaps Guthrie's greatest impact on Mr Dylan: their shared notion that a song is never finished, but always evolving.





Photograph: Getty Images

## **Sara Duterte, the Philippines' possible next president**

A few months ago, things looked grim for Sara Duterte, the 47-year-old vice-president of the Philippines. The country's House of Representatives impeached her, accusing Ms Duterte of threatening to assassinate the president, Ferdinand "BongBong" Marcos. She faced a ban from politics if convicted of the charges. Then the International Criminal Court indicted her father, Rodrigo, for crimes against humanity committed in a brutal drug war during his presidency (he denies this). The Duterte dynasty looked like it could be over.

Yet the family now seems on the up. The Supreme Court struck down the impeachment in July. Then the Senate voted not to proceed with a trial. These wins make Ms Duterte the likely front-runner to be the next president, in 2028. They also mean that her [nasty feud](#) with Mr Marcos, another scion of a political clan with a grubby history, will become even more disruptive.

Ms Duterte typifies the Philippines' dynastic political system, where powerful families make up around 80% of Congress. She first took office in 2007 as vice-mayor of Davao, a city where her father was elected mayor eight times. The family name helped her win the vice-presidency in 2022, when she formed an uneasy partnership with Mr Marcos.

She also thrives in a political culture dominated by big personalities. Celebrities are often elected in the Philippines. Politicians play up to the crowds on social media and in real life. A recent election rally for Ms Duterte's supporters in Manila, the capital, felt like a rock concert. Some wore T-shirts emblazoned with the slogan "Bring Him [Rodrigo] Home" (from The Hague).

Ms Duterte's views seem similar to her father's. She has criticised Mr Marcos for tilting towards America and said the Philippines "shouldn't lean toward any foreign power". Still, it is not clear whether she would, or could, reorient the country towards China, which her father cosied up to as president. Ties with America are stronger now.

Yet with the Dutertes resurgent, the dynastic dispute could disrupt the rest of Mr Marcos's presidency. Ms Duterte has a growing number of allies in Congress. If they obstruct the government, ordinary Filipinos will be the biggest losers.





Illustration: The Economist

## Mini 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

*1 across* Raunchy bride conceals cross (6)

*2 across* Revolutionary heads of landed estates neutralised in November (5)

*3 across* Remembered to remove reed organ (6)

*1 down* Uncertain pause after detective takes in an archeological site (11)

### Straight

*1 across* Amalgamation of two different styles; a crossbreed (6)

2 across Russian leader whose bust looms over a corner of Norway (5)

3 across Participant of a club (6)

1 down Lesser-known victim of Vesuvius (11)

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.

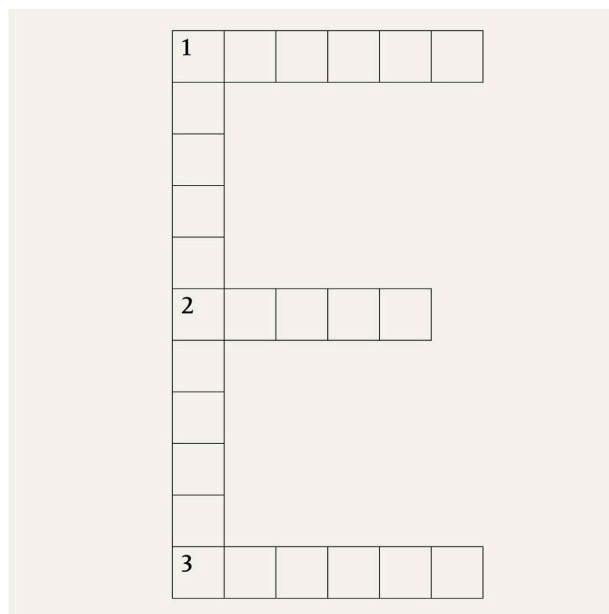


Image: The Economist



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:

**Peter Pendergest**, Burbank, California, America

**Anna Powell**, Roswell, Georgia America

**Penny Dodd**, Calgary, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of: the perch, The Chain, Vince Gill, league and Edward Furlong. The theme is imperial measurements: a perch is 1/160th of an acre, a chain is 22 yards, a gill is 5 imperial ounces, a league is three miles and a furlong is 220 yards.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which fish, from the family percidae, has European and yellow varieties?

**Tuesday:** Which Fleetwood Mac song, with its well-known bass line, opens side 2 of the Rumours album?

**Wednesday:** Which country music star is noted for hits such as "One More Last Chance" and "I Still Believe In You"?

**Thursday:** What does the L stand for in EFL and NFL, two sports competitions?

**Friday:** Who starred as John Connor in Terminator 2: Judgment Day?

*Everybody is interesting for an hour, but few people can last more than two.*

---

***V.S. Naipaul***