

## Catch up: Israel blocks aid to Gaza; Zelensky welcomed back to Europe



**Israel** stopped aid from entering Gaza as uncertainty grew over the [extension of a ceasefire](#) with Hamas. Earlier Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister, said that Israel would accept a revised proposal to extend the initial 42-day truce, reportedly suggested by America. But Hamas said it wanted to move directly to the second-stage of the original deal, involving talks over a permanent end to the war.

Sir Keir Starmer, **Britain's** prime minister, told the BBC that Britain would develop a plan with Ukraine, France and other allies to end the war with Russia, which they would then present to America. The comments came before a summit of European allies in London. Europe is [scrambling to support](#) Ukraine after a [disastrous meeting](#) between the country's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and Donald Trump on Friday.

The **Adani Group** is reportedly planning to revive its investments in **America**, despite the Indian conglomerate's founder [facing criminal charges](#) in the country. In November Gautam Adani was accused of bribing Indian officials in exchange for favourable

terms on solar-power projects. According to the *Financial Times*, Mr Adani is hopeful that the charges will eventually be dropped, after Mr Trump halted enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

The **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)**, a militant Kurdish group that has been a thorn in Turkey's side for decades, called a ceasefire. The move followed a [public demand](#) for the group to disarm by its long-imprisoned leader, Abdullah Ocalan. The ending of the insurgency could help deliver another term in power for Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Further talks will establish what the Kurds get.

America's government will send 3,000 **troops to the border** with Mexico to stop migrants from entering the country illegally. Together with the soldiers announced earlier this week, they will bring the total at the border to around 9,000. Crossings have fallen in recent months since the Biden administration tightened controls. Nevertheless Mr Trump has decried a "disastrous invasion" to justify his [immigration crackdown](#).

**Andrew Cuomo**, a disgraced Democratic politician who resigned as New York's governor in 2021, will run to be the mayor of New York City. Mr Cuomo [stood down](#) after several women accused him of sexual harassment, which he denied. He will attempt to unseat Eric Adams, the incumbent, in primary elections in June. Last month the Department of Justice controversially moved to [dismiss an indictment](#) against Mr Adams for corruption; he also denies wrongdoing.

The Vatican said that **Pope Francis's** "clinical condition" remains stable, after he suffered a bronchial spasm on Friday. The 88-year-old pontiff has long battled respiratory problems, and has been in hospital with pneumonia for more than two weeks. The Vatican said that the "prognosis remains guarded".

**Word of the week:** güero, a Spanish term used in Mexico and the United States to describe a white person, often affectionately. [Read the full story.](#)

# Europe's plan for defence



On Sunday Sir Keir Starmer, Britain's prime minister, will host fellow European leaders in London. It will be the second such impromptu summit since [Donald Trump](#) began peace talks with Vladimir Putin two weeks ago, sidelining Ukraine and its European allies. Sir Keir, Emmanuel Macron, France's president, and Volodymyr Zelensky, his Ukrainian counterpart, have all travelled to Washington in recent days. Mr Zelensky's visit ended abruptly after a [bitter, televised falling-out](#) with Mr Trump.

Europe's leaders will show their support for Mr Zelensky. They will probably also discuss plans to raise defence spending, newly important following Mr Trump's turn against Mr Zelensky. One idea is a so-called "rearmament bank". Another is a change to the European Union's fiscal rules. A third is to tap unspent covid recovery funds. The cash is necessary not just to placate Mr Trump in the short run, but for crash rearmament if he offers Europe on a plate to Mr Putin.

# Austria's new government does the right thing



About five months after parliamentary elections in [Austria](#), the centre-right ÖVP, the social democratic SPÖ and the liberal NEOS have agreed to form a government. At the end of tortuous talks the three parties agreed on a programme called “Do the right thing now. For Austria”.

After the first round of negotiations among them failed in early January, the ÖVP tried to form a government with the far-right FPÖ, which got more votes than any other party at elections in September. But those discussions collapsed because of the radical views of Herbert Kickl, the FPÖ’s leader. Now the trio are united in their desire to keep him out of power.

Christian Stocker, the leader of the ÖVP (pictured in the middle), will probably be the next chancellor. Andreas Babler, the SPÖ leader, will be his deputy. On Sunday members of the NEOS will probably approve the coalition agreement. Austria’s president is likely to swear in the government on Monday.

## Tajikistan votes in an opposition-free election



On Sunday Tajiks vote in a [parliamentary election](#). The ruling party of Emomali Rahmon, the dictatorial president, is sure to have a large majority. Mr Rahmon has banned all opposition forces bar one party that is not fielding candidates. All “rival” parties with candidates support Mr Rahmon, the “Founder of Peace and National Unity and Leader of the Nation”.

The 72-year-old has been in office for 33 years. He has recently shown signs of preparing the central Asian republic, a poor country of 10.5m people, for a dynastic succession. Rustam Emomali, his eldest son, is the presumptive heir. He is mayor of the capital, Dushanbe, and chairs parliament’s upper house. This election will further tighten the president’s grip on power, making it easier for him to bequeath it to his son whenever he sees fit.



# An extreme sport in Switzerland



For some athletes, climbing big mountains or [skiing](#) unmarked descents is not sufficiently challenging. So they compete in a sport that requires both. Ski-mountaineering, or “skimo”, demands the highest levels of fitness and technical expertise. The very cold and steep environments make it dangerous. Picking the wrong route or misjudging the weather can be fatal.

The World Championships begin on Sunday in Morgins, in southern Switzerland. The events will focus on speed more than technical challenges. The sprint race involves a short, steep climb, a walk on skis and a rapid descent; it is meant to be completed within three minutes. Another course is supposed to take an individual competitor an hour to complete. It includes 500 metres of climbing and the same distance of downhill skiing. The team event is the most demanding, with six climbs and descents. Skimo will soon have a larger following: in February 2026 it will feature in the Winter Olympics for the first time.

# An uncertain Academy Awards



A few things are guaranteed at the Academy Awards on Sunday: exquisite, impractical gowns; jokes of mixed quality; tearful acceptance speeches; a jibe or two at President Donald Trump. What is less certain is who will go home with the coveted statuettes.

Bookmakers reckon that Adrien Brody is a shoo-in for Best Actor for his performance in “The Brutalist”. But Timothée Chalamet, recently awarded by the Screen Actors Guild for his portrayal of Bob Dylan in [“A Complete Unknown”](#), will be hoping for another triumph. Bookies favour Demi Moore, who is 62 years old, for Best Actress. Many in the industry feel that Hollywood is ageist, but if Mikey Madison, the second-favourite, wins for [“Anora”](#), she would be the first actress in her 20s to get the Oscar since Emma Stone in 2017.

The hardest category to predict has historically been Best Picture. This year “Anora”, “The Brutalist” and “Conclave” are strong contenders. In film awards, as in films, uncertainty may encourage people to watch to the end.



# Weekly crossword



We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword, 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* Chaotically leash my daring senator (7,6)

*1 across* Call on donors to reveal capital (6)

*2 across* At first you invest every last dollar for this (5)

*3 across* Tom is a revolutionary adherent of communism (6)

## Factual clues

*1 down* Senator for South Carolina who found little wrong with the dismissal of 18 inspectors-general (7,6)

*1 across* European capital that is technically classed as a forest (6)

*2 across* What Donald Trump would like to lower on ten-year Treasury bonds (5)

*3 across* Such communist fervour drove China and the Soviet Union to the brink of war in the late 1960s (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [crossword@economist.com](mailto:crossword@economist.com). We will pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners in next week's edition.

## The winners of this week's quiz



*The Economist*

Thank you to everyone who took part in this week's quiz. The winners, chosen at random, were:

**Amanda Hey**, Sudbury, Canada

**Caroline English**, Ann Arbor, Michigan, America

**Andreea Imecs**, Bath, Britain

They all gave the correct answers of Face/Off, Martin Short, Under Milk Wood, Back to the Future and Animal Farm. The theme is words ending in hand: offhand, shorthand, underhand, back hand and farmhand.

The questions were:

**Monday:** In which 1997 film thriller, directed by John Woo, do Nicolas Cage and John Travolta swap identities?

**Tuesday:** Who co-stars with Steve Martin and Selena Gomez in the TV series *Only Murders in the Building*

**Wednesday:** Which play by Dylan Thomas is set in the fictional Welsh town of Llareggub?

**Thursday:** Which movie series stars Michael J. Fox as the time-travelling Marty McFly?

**Friday:** Which satirical novel by George Orwell features a tyrannical pig named Napoleon?

# Güero

*A Spanish term used in Mexico and the United States to describe a white person, often affectionately.*

*Read the full story.*



**Simplicity is the highest goal, achievable  
when you have overcome all difficulties.**

*Frédéric Chopin*