

Catch up: Ukraine and Russia's prisoner swap; dating apps & income inequality



Russia released more than 100 **Ukrainian** soldiers and officers who it had captured during Ukraine's [incursion into the Kursk region](#); Ukraine released the same number of Russians. It is the second large prisoner-of-war swap in two days. The deal was mediated by the United Arab Emirates—the eighth one brokered by the Gulf state since the start of 2024.

[Dating apps](#) may have contributed up to half of the growth in **America's income inequality** since 1980, according to researchers from the Federal Reserve and Haverford College. Americans have become less picky about their mates' race (though it is still their leading criterion), but more so about their skills, education and income, leading the well-off to partner up.

A third day of **torrential rains** across central and eastern Europe has put several countries at risk of the worst flooding in four decades. In **Romania** flash floods killed at least four; 5,000 households have been evacuated. The **Czech Republic** is on its highest flood alert in 38 locations; **Poland** has also started

evacuations. **Austria's** mountainous regions are seeing [unusually heavy snowfall](#); multiple freight rail lines there are down.

America rejected allegations that it was involved in a plot to overthrow Nicolás Maduro, **Venezuela's** president, after Venezuelan officials arrested three Americans, two Spaniards and a Czech over a “destabilisation attempt”. Since stealing an election in July, Mr Maduro has [cracked down](#) on his opponents. Both America and Spain have recognised Edmundo Gonzalez, the opposition leader, as the winner of the election.

Koizumi Shinjiro, a top contender to become [Japan's next prime minister](#), used a debate to exhort America to allow **Nippon Steel** to buy **US Steel**. He said the two allies needed a united industry in the face of cheap Chinese competition. Joe Biden, America's president, and both candidates to replace him, Donald Trump and Kamala Harris, [oppose the deal](#).

South Sudan's transitional government extended its own mandate for another two years, delaying elections planned for December this year until 2026. It said that more time was needed to draft a permanent constitution, hold a census and register political parties. The tasks were set out under a peace deal signed in 2018 to end the civil war that followed the country's [secession from Sudan](#) in 2011.

Britain's Conservative Party, which became the official opposition after a disastrous election in July, seems to be having trouble letting go of power. Some [Tory MPs](#) paid their departments a reported £2,000 (\$2,625) to keep their ministerial “red boxes” as mementoes. In use since at least the 1850s, the flashy file cases have become [collectables](#); Margaret Thatcher's was auctioned off for £242,500 in 2015.

Word of the week: Ilish, a bony freshwater fish, which is not just a staple of Bangladeshis' diet but an integral part of their identity. [Read the full story.](#)

Scholz on tour in Central Asia



Olaf Scholz is [unpopular at home](#). The premier of Brandenburg, Dietmar Woidke, does not even want the German chancellor's help for the last week of campaigning before the state's election next weekend. Abroad, however, Mr Scholz remains very welcome. On Sunday he is travelling to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. It is his first trip to Central Asia.

The focus is a migration agreement to encourage the training and recruitment of skilled labour from Uzbekistan. The deal will also make it easier to repatriate Uzbeks without the right to remain in Germany. In Kazakhstan attention will turn to oil, gas, renewable energies, copper and other raw materials. Within the "C5+1" framework, Mr Scholz will also meet the leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. However, neither the Uzbeks nor the Kazakhs have agreed to hold a press conference with their illustrious guest. They would rather not hear critical questions from pesky German journalists on awkward subjects such as human rights.

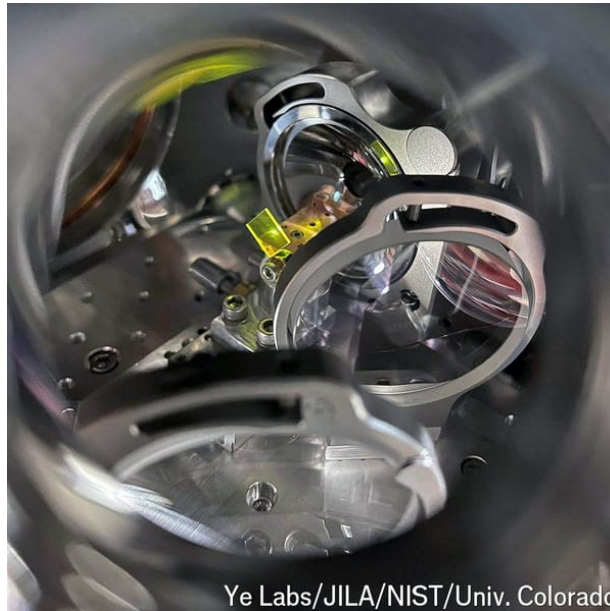
Stalemate in Gaza-ceasefire talks



Both sides at war in Gaza are hunkering down as America prepares to present what could be a “last attempt” to reach a ceasefire agreement before November’s presidential election. Israel said on Thursday that it had destroyed the Hamas brigade in Rafah, a city in southern Gaza. However, Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel’s prime minister, still refuses to countenance a withdrawal from the “[Philadelphi Corridor](#)”, a narrow strip on the Gaza-Egypt border. Hamas has also rejected the previous American ceasefire proposal, which included the release of some of the 101 Israeli hostages still held in Gaza.

On Friday President Joe Biden and Sir Keir Starmer, Britain’s prime minister, discussed ways of pushing Israel towards a deal. Qatari and Egyptian officials have been trying to do the same with Hamas. But as the war in Gaza rumbles on towards the first anniversary of the Hamas attack on October 7th, there is scant optimism on finding the formula to end it.

A new clock on the block



Atomic clocks are the best timekeepers around. Vastly better than even the best quartz ones, they underpin everything from GPS to stockmarket trading. But they are about to have competition. Scientists recently reported that they have all the necessary components to make the atomic timepiece's successor: the [nuclear clock](#).

Both atomic and nuclear clocks work by shooting radiation onto a group of atoms to pin down a specific frequency. In atomic clocks, that frequency excites electrons into a higher energy state; in nuclear ones, it excites nuclear particles: protons and neutrons. Each wave cycle of the radiation corresponds to a “tick”, counting a tiny fraction of a second. Once the nuclear clock runs optimally, it could be 1,000 times more accurate than standard atomic counterparts. But more so than replacing those, physicists are excited to have two independent ways to measure time, which will allow them to probe the laws of physics in new ways—undeniably time well spent.

Van Gogh's starry final works



Philadelphia Museum of Art

Vincent van Gogh imagined his “Sunflowers” paintings would travel. At first they hung in his house in France, “like a huge welcoming bouquet” for his friend and fellow artist, [Paul Gauguin](#). But one day, he thought, a pair of them might adorn the cabin of a ship and bring comfort to homesick sailors. After van Gogh’s death in 1890 the flowers did indeed journey—to art museums across the world.

“Van Gogh: Poets and Lovers”, opening this weekend at the National Gallery in London, reunites a pair he wanted to send to sea, arranging them in triptych with “La Berceuse”, a portrait of Augustine Roulin. The exhibition surrounds the flowers with works from the last two years of his life, a kaleidoscope of colours and rebellious modernism. “Starry Night over the Rhône” is dreamlike; “The Olive Trees” is sublime. Many paintings have crossed oceans for the exhibition, a fact that would have delighted the artist.

New favourites at the Emmy awards

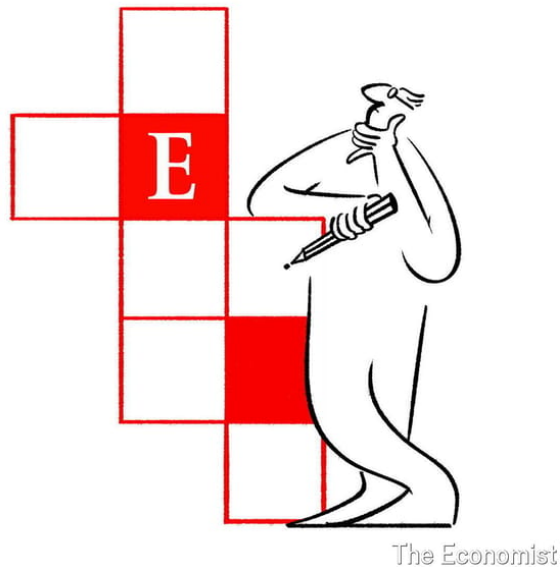


On Sunday the great and the good of the small screen descend on the Peacock Theatre in Los Angeles for the Emmy awards, television's equivalent of the Oscars. It is the second time this year that prizes will be handed out; the Hollywood strike meant that 2023's edition was postponed until January.

Several shows and actors may pick up the same awards as they did just a few months ago. Jeremy Allen White, the star of “The Bear”, is again the favourite for Best Actor in a Comedy Series. The show broke comedy records by earning 23 nominations. (Indeed, many think it is a joke to categorise a tense restaurant drama as a comedy.)

Yet some marquee programmes—notably HBO's “Succession”—have finished, which should make room for new winners. Expect FX's “[Shogun](#)”, set in 17th-century Japan, to make good on many of its 25 nominations. And Netflix will be hoping “The Crown” can sparkle in its final season.

Weekly crossword



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 Musician remedies song after remix (6,6)

1 across Pilfered fruit bread, we hear (6)

2 across In Koran, geranium bears fruit (6)

3 across Vegetable, n. Found in northern Europe (6)

Factual clues

1 down Grammy-winning Brazilian bandleader (6,6)

1 across How Donald Trump describes the 2020 election (6)

2 across Increasingly expensive fruit blighted by disease and drought (6)

3 across Scandinavian country whose prime minister has adopted three Chinese children (6)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to 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:

Meredith Angwin, Melbourne, Australia

Alistair Nicklin, Naivasha Kenya

Ignacio and Carolina Guerrero, Santiago, Chile

They all gave the correct answers of: Humphrey Bogart, Charles Barkley, Wallace, James Garner and Robert Harris. The theme is US vice-presidents: Hubert Humphrey, Alben Barkley, Henry Wallace, John Nance Garner and Kamala Harris.

The questions were:

Monday: Which Hollywood legend won the best actor Oscar for his performance in "The African Queen"? **Tuesday:** Which former basketball player was nicknamed "the Bread Truck" and "the Round Mound of Rebound"?

Wednesday: Which cheese-eating animated character appeared in the Oscar-winning short films "The Wrong Trousers" and "A Close Shave"?

Thursday: Which actor played Jim Rockford in the detective series “The Rockford Files”?

Friday: Which novelist wrote “Imperium”, “Lustrum” and “Dictator”, a trio of novels about the Roman orator, Cicero?

Ilish

A bony freshwater fish, which is not just a staple of Bangladeshis' diet but an integral part of their identity.

Read the full story.

All greatness of character is dependent on individuality.

James Fenimore Cooper