

Catch up: Ukraine strikes Russian city; IDF raids the West Bank

Ukrainian strikes killed five people and injured 46 more in Belgorod, a city in south-western Russia, according to Russian authorities. Belgorod has frequently come under Ukrainian attack before. Earlier **Volodymyr Zelensky**, Ukraine's president, sacked the commander of the **air force**, Mykola Oleshchuk. Mr Zelensky did not specify a reason, but the dismissal came a day after Ukraine confirmed that an F-16 fighter jet was destroyed, and its pilot killed, during a Russian missile barrage earlier in the week. Ukraine had long sought the [American-made F-16s](#).

The **Israel Defence Forces** said that it killed two Palestinians in the [occupied West Bank](#) in an overnight operation. One had infiltrated an Israeli settlement, and the other shot at soldiers after his car exploded. Two people were injured in the incidents, according to Israel's ambulance services. The IDF has killed at least 22 people since it sent in ground troops on Wednesday.

China and the **Philippines** accused each other of ramming coastguard ships in a disputed area of the South China Sea—almost all of which China claims as its own. The Philippines said China “intentionally” struck its vessel, while China accused the Philippines of “deliberately” crashing into its ship. The Philippines reported no injuries. [Tensions](#) are mounting between the two countries; this was their fifth maritime clash in a month.

A statement by leaders from the **Pacific Islands Forum**, the region's main diplomatic grouping, was amended to remove references to Taiwan. The original document, issued on Friday after the forum's annual meeting, included mentions of its relationship with Taiwan, which drew ire from Chinese officials. China is not a

member of the group, but attends some events as a “dialogue partner”.

A block on **X**, a social-media platform, came into force in **Brazil**. Alexandre de Moraes, a Supreme Court judge, had ordered the firm, which is owned by **Elon Musk**, to appoint a legal representative in the country, but it missed the deadline to do so. [Mr Moraes’s clampdown](#) on X is part of a broader effort to tackle online disinformation in Brazil; [Mr Musk](#) has repeatedly called Mr Moraes’s work “evil”.

American and **Iraqi** troops launched a joint military operation in western Iraq that killed 15 members of Islamic State, a [jihadist group](#). America’s army said that the militants were armed with weapons, grenades and suicide-belts. Seven American soldiers were injured. Iraq’s army claimed that leading members of the group were killed in the operation, which was carried out on Thursday.

Osiel Cárdenas, an infamous **Mexican drug lord**, was released from prison in America. He served a 21-year sentence for his role as a former leader of the Gulf Cartel and Los Zetas, feared crime organisations specialising in marijuana and cocaine trafficking and extreme violence. As of May 2024, cartels controlled around a third of Mexico’s territory, according to the Council of Foreign Relations, a think-tank.

Word of the week: Digital twin, a virtual representation of something, capable of modelling its behaviour in real time. [Read the full story.](#)

Germany's fraught state elections



Between them Saxony and Thuringia, two states in eastern Germany, account for just 7% of the country's population. Yet their [elections on Sunday](#) will be the most closely watched state polls in the country for years. In Thuringia, and possibly Saxony, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is likely to chalk up its first-ever state-election win. Also set to do well is the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), a new outfit that blends AfD-like scepticism on both immigration and [support for Ukraine](#) with leftist economics.

Every other party shuns the AfD, so it will remain in opposition. But the centre-right Christian Democrats (CDU), the only mainstream party not in free fall in the east, may be forced into unholy alliances with the BSW. Watch out for national implications, too: all three parties in Germany's "traffic-light" coalition could fall below the 5% threshold to enter parliament in both states. That will revive questions on whether it can last its full term.

AMLO's last blast



In his last month as Mexico's president [Andrés Manuel López Obrador](#) should be a lame duck. Not so. When the newly elected congress regroups on Sunday, his ruling coalition will have the numbers to push through damaging constitutional reforms. The big one is an overhaul of the judiciary, which would see federal judges fired and replaced by ones elected by popular vote, including to the Supreme Court.

Mexico's justice system is wanting. But the changes proposed by Morena, Mr López Obrador's party, do not help. They lower the required qualifications for judges, giving politicians more sway. Other amendments will do further damage to Mexico's democracy and economy, notably ones to eliminate autonomous bodies and put the National Guard, a federal police force, under military control. Claudia Sheinbaum, who will become president on October 1st, has been far too acquiescent to her mentor's plans. She will inherit the fallout. Yet, recently wed, she will go on honeymoon in the first days of September.

Azerbaijan's regime turns on its critics



On Sunday nearly 1,000 candidates will compete for 125 parliamentary seats in Azerbaijan. The country's president, Ilham Aliyev, brought the elections forward by two months, so as not to coincide with COP29, a United Nations climate-change summit, which Azerbaijan hosts in November.

No one in Azerbaijan is holding their breath. The parliament is toothless, with most powers concentrated in the hands of the president. Elections are skewed in the regime's favour; the largest opposition party is boycotting the poll. Mr Aliyev's own New Azerbaijan Party and its allies are almost certain to receive another overwhelming majority.

Hopes that the country would open up to democracy after its war with Armenia ended are quickly fading. If anything, taking back land has [empowered the autocratic Mr Aliyev](#) to go after his enemies at home even more vigorously. Several journalists and activists have been arrested on trumped-up charges in past months. Azerbaijan's ruler of two decades can sleep easy.

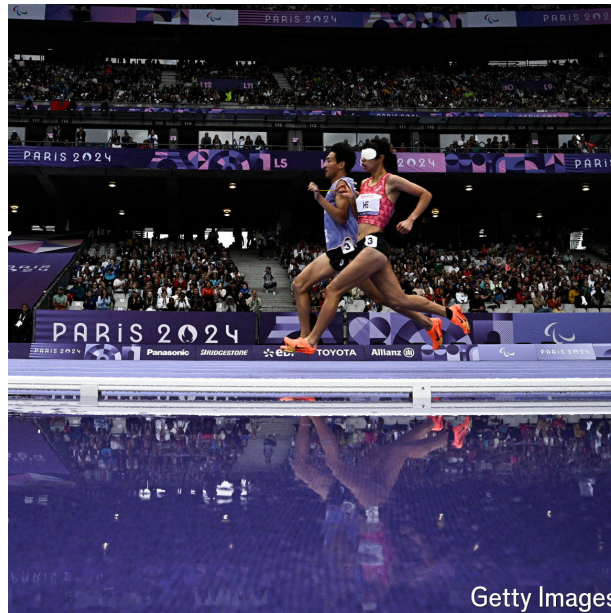
Monkeys also name their mates



Time and again humans will interpret their species' behaviour as a sign of unique intelligence, only to be proven wrong. For instance, it was long thought that humans were the sole animal to call others by name. In 2006 dolphins were discovered to do it, too. In June, [elephants](#) were added to that list. And this week scientists at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem reported that marmosets—small monkeys with walnut-sized brains—name each other too.

Marmosets frequently engage in “dialogue” consisting of back-and-forth whistle-like calls. When the researchers separated familiar marmosets by a barrier so they could not see each other, the monkeys instantly started chatting across it. The researchers recorded them and, using machine learning, were able to pick out calls that seemed to function as names. Indeed it may be handy for many social animals to label friends and family. More may yet be named.

The evolution of the Paralympics



The modern Olympic Games are unrecognisable from their first edition. In 1896, 241 men from 14 countries met in Athens for nine days of competition. But the Paralympics have changed even more. Although some athletes with disabilities had competed in the Olympics, it was not until 1948 that a German-Jewish doctor in Britain, Ludwig Guttmann, organised a tournament for [war veterans](#) with spinal injuries.

Four years later veterans from the Netherlands also participated and by 1960 the first official Paralympic Games were held in Rome. Since 1988 the Olympics and Paralympics have been held in the same city, one after the other, and using the same venues.

The next step for the Paralympics is to follow the Olympics in eliminating its gender gap. The [Paris games](#) will set a new mark of 45% female participation; the number of female athletes will be almost twice that of the Sydney event in 2000. In every respect, the games are moving quickly.

QUIZ WINNERS



The Economist

Digital twin

a virtual representation of something, capable of modelling its behaviour in real time.

[Read the full story](#)

TK

**The child gives us a beautiful lesson—that
in order to form and maintain our
intelligence, we must use our hands**

Maria Montessori