

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Russia charged four men for carrying out the [terror attack](#) in **Moscow** that killed 137 people. The men were identified as citizens of Tajikistan. Islamic State has claimed responsibility for the rampage, but Russian officials have tried to put some of the blame on Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, called Russian leaders "scum" for linking the attack to his country. Meanwhile, France raised its terror alert warning system to its highest level.

The UN's agency for Palestinian refugees said **Israel** had barred it from delivering aid to northern **Gaza**. According to the UNRWA, the decision was relayed in a meeting with [Israeli military officials](#), with no explanation given. The head of the agency called the move "outrageous" as a famine looms. Meanwhile Israeli forces continued their assault in southern Gaza, surrounding two hospitals, according to a Palestinian NGO.

Prosecutors filed eight new corruption charges against S. Iswaran, **Singapore's** former transport minister. Mr Iswaran, who denies any wrongdoing, was arrested last year and now faces a total of 35 charges. The new allegations accuse him of receiving kickbacks worth around \$14,000. The case has shocked the usually [scandal-free city-state](#). A minister was last charged with corruption there in 1986.

Bassirou Diomaye Faye took an early lead as votes were counted in **Senegal's** presidential election. Amadou Ba, the ruling coalition's candidate, warned him not to celebrate prematurely. The vote, which was [constitutionally required](#) to take place last month, was delayed by the president, Macky Sall, prompting violent protests.

Mr Sall is not standing this time. Senegal has been a rare beacon of [stability and democracy](#) in west Africa.

China announced new procurement rules that would phase out the use of American microprocessors built by Intel and AMD from government computers. According to the *Financial Times*, state agencies have been instructed to purchase “safe and reliable” chips—all from Chinese firms. The guidelines are part of a campaign to replace foreign technology with [homegrown products](#), mirroring efforts by America to reduce reliance on Chinese companies.

Simon Harris became the leader of Fine Gael, **Ireland’s** centre-right ruling party, and thus the country’s presumptive new prime minister. Mr Harris, currently the higher education minister, will replace Leo Varadkar, who unexpectedly resigned on Wednesday. He will be formally appointed when parliament reconvenes on April 9th. He was the only candidate to be nominated by his colleagues.

In **Ecuador** Brigitte Garcia, the 27-year-old mayor of the town of San Vicente, was found shot dead in her car, alongside her communications director. Ms Garcia was from the opposition Citizen Revolution Movement party. The country has been plagued by violence, blamed largely on a [drugs war](#). Last August Fernando Villavicencio, a presidential candidate and outspoken critic of organised crime, was assassinated.

Figure of the day: 30%. The fee collected by Apple, a tech giant, on most purchases made using the App Store. [Read the full story.](#)



Photo: Getty Images

The IMF's advice to China

On Sunday the head of the IMF, Kristalina Georgieva, who this month won crucial European backing for a second term, gave a speech to the China Development Forum, a gabfest for foreign investors and businessmen in Beijing. The fund and China agree on some things, including the dangers of trade wars and decoupling (which the IMF calls “geoeconomic fragmentation”).

Ms Georgieva and China's leaders also agree that the country needs to shift from fast growth to “high-quality” growth. But they may differ in what that transition requires. Ms Georgieva urged China to embrace a package of “pro-market reforms”, which include raising the retirement age to 65, levelling the playing field between state-owned enterprises and private firms, and boosting the country's social-security system to encourage consumption. The transformation will not be easy, she warned, especially for China's younger generations, “who have lived their whole lives in an environment of exceptionally high growth rates”.



Photo: Alamy

Weekend profile: María Corina Machado, Venezuela's opposition leader

Long dismissed as too radical, too outspoken and way too posh to get anywhere in Venezuelan politics, María Corina Machado has spent the past year proving her critics wrong. She won an opposition primary last October by a landslide and [would roundly defeat](#) Nicolás Maduro, the country's authoritarian president, in a fair election. So would almost anyone, of course—but for Ms Machado the revenge would be especially sweet.

For decades she has been one of the fiercest critics of *chavismo*, the leftist populist movement set up by the late Hugo Chávez. His corruption and cronyism spawned the disastrous collapse of the Venezuelan economy under Mr Maduro, his chosen successor. In 2012 Ms Machado achieved iconic status among conservatives by calling out *chavismo*'s failings on live television, to Chávez's face. In the national assembly, Ms Machado, then a congresswoman, interrupted an interminable speech by Chávez to suggest that his policy of expropriating private businesses would be better described as "theft". The president's boorish response was that debating her was entirely beneath him. The interaction aged

appallingly for *chavismo*, while Ms Machado has been proved right.

A qualified industrial engineer, mother of three and daughter of a wealthy industrialist—whose steel factories were expropriated (and then mismanaged to destruction) by the Chávez government—Ms Machado is a firm believer in free markets. Most of the 56-year-old's economic policies could be described as centre-right.

The Maduro regime portrays her as a merciless extremist, citing her support for American sanctions and falsely claiming that she backed American military intervention against Venezuela. In June 2023 it banned her from politics for 15 years, and upheld that decision after she won the primary in October. Since then, it has also begun persecuting those who work with her. So far nine of her party workers have been arrested for allegedly planning to organise street violence. Ms Machado, whose political slogan is “hasta el final”—until the end—has promised that none of the regime's intimidation tactics will ever faze her.



Photo: Getty Images

Intermittent fasting may strain the heart

Intermittent fasting is a broad church. Its practitioners range from occasional breakfast-skippers to committed clock-watchers, who proselytise the diet's weight-loss benefits. In fairness, some studies have backed these claims—but only with respect to short-term effects. Now, the first long-term study of intermittent fasting has cast doubt on its supposed health-giving qualities.

The study, by a Chinese team and presented at a conference of the American Heart Association, analysed data from 20,000 American adults over a median of eight years. It found that those who reported eating only within an eight-hour daily window had a 91% higher risk of death from cardiovascular disease.

The research, however, has not been peer reviewed and did not investigate why restricted mealtimes might contribute to worse heart health. This omission, among other limitations, means that the study is unlikely to bring any hardcore fasters to the breakfast table. For now then, intermittent fasting will remain the subject of (early) dinnertime debates.



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:

Sylvester Tan, Dallas, Texas, America

Jennifer Stapleton, Cheltenham, Britain

Willy Zimmer, Casper, Wyoming, America

They all gave the correct answers of Babylon, Olympia Dukakis, Rhodes, Lighthouse Family and a pyramid scheme. The theme is the seven wonders of the ancient world: the Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Colossus of Rhodes, the lighthouse of Alexandria and the Great Pyramid of Giza.

The questions were:

Monday: Rastafarians use the name of which ancient Mesopotamian city to refer to the white western world?

Tuesday: Which actress, who won an Oscar for Moonstruck, was a cousin of a Democratic Presidential candidate?

Wednesday: Which Greek island, the largest in the Dodecanese, was ruled by the knights of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem from 1310 to 1522?

Thursday: Which pop act, which rose to fame in the mid-1990s, had hits such as “Ocean Drive” and “Lifted”?

Friday: Which fraudulent marketing scheme requires participant

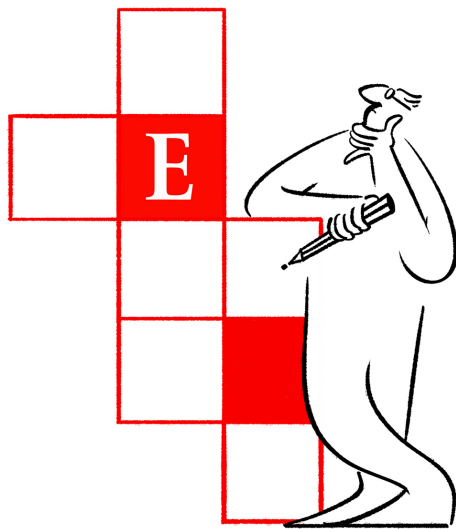


Photo: Reuters

Senegal's long-awaited election

Little more than a month ago Senegal was in the midst of a [constitutional crisis](#). Macky Sall, the departing president, had tried to delay elections by ten months. His [most popular rival](#) was behind bars and disqualified from running. Security forces were beating and arresting protesters. Many feared that a country widely seen as a bulwark of stability in the region was now going the same way as all those others beset by bloody [coups and overstaying presidents](#).

So it is with relief that citizens of one of Africa's most vibrant democracies finally went to the polls on Sunday. Senegal's constitutional court slapped down Mr Sall's bid to postpone them, and his opponents have since been released from prison. Of the 19 contenders now on the ballot at least three are real contenders to succeed Mr Sall, who is not running. A vote many feared might not happen is instead set to be a nail-biter.



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* Form of fighting animated far cry: "beware" (12)
- 1 *across* Office of National Statistics not needed in consensus count (6)
- 2 *across* Earnings years after last cashflow (5)
- 3 *across* Great flight book (6)

Factual clues

- 1 *down* One type of aggression that Russia is inflicting on Ukraine (12)
- 1 *across* What reveals levels of migration (6)
- 2 *across* What Japan's biggest firms recently agreed to raise (5)
- 3 *across* What pandemic-era lockdowns triggered in Indian cities (6)

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

1					
2					
3					



Photo: Getty Images

NFL franchises are too big to buy

NFL American football teams are the most valuable sports clubs on the planet. According to Sportico, a sports analysis company, 12 of the top 20 belong to the league. Their success in selling out stadiums and attracting the biggest sports broadcasting deal in

history has made NFL owners extraordinarily rich. But it has also created a big problem. So valuable are the NFL franchises that it has become very difficult to find anyone with deep enough pockets to buy them.

At the owners' latest pow-wow, which begins on Saturday in Florida, loosening the league's strict investment rules (the lead owner needs to control at least 30%, among other stipulations) could thus be up for discussion. In 2022 the National Basketball Association relaxed its rules to permit private-equity firms to buy up to 20% of a team and sovereign wealth funds to own up to 5%. The NFL is unlikely to go so far immediately, but the sale of passive stakes to local investors is increasingly likely in the long run.

Only great minds can afford a simple style.

Stendhal