

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

**Ukraine's** president, [Volodymyr Zelensky](#), warned that Russia could yet expand its assault on Kharkiv, a north-eastern region, as he called on Western allies to increase supplies of military aid. Russia launched a surprise attack on the province on May 10th. Mr Zelensky suggested Russian forces had advanced up to 10km before being stopped. He said that Ukraine only had “around 25%” of the air defences that it needed and was also short on manpower. Meanwhile, Kharkiv's governor said 10,000 people had been evacuated in the region over the past week.

**Benny Gantz** said he would pull his centrist party out of Binyamin Netanyahu's emergency wartime coalition if the Israeli prime minister did not agree to a new plan for the [future](#) of **Israel's** war by June 8th. Mr Gantz set out a six-point strategy that prioritised the return of captives being held by Hamas. His ultimatum came after Israeli forces said they had recovered the body of another hostage, the fourth in two days.

**Vietnam's** Communist Party nominated To Lam, the public security minister, as the country's president. His appointment is expected to be approved by the country's rubber-stamp parliament as early as next week. Mr Lam will replace Vo Van Thuong, who [resigned in mysterious circumstances](#) in March after just over a year in the post. The tumult spooked foreign investors, who have bet big on Vietnam as the region's hottest economy.

**Georgia's** president, Salome Zourabichvili, vetoed a Russian-style “foreign agents” law that was passed by the country's parliament [despite mass protests](#). The law requires NGOs and media outlets that receive more than 20% of their funding from abroad to register

as agents of foreign interests. Critics say the law could be used to quash dissent and would hinder Georgia's path to joining the European Union. The ruling Georgian Dream party is likely to overturn Ms Zourabichvili's veto via another parliamentary vote.

Torrential rain brought a fresh bout of flooding to **Afghanistan**, killing 50 people, according to a local official. Last week floods in the north-east of the country killed hundreds, as mud washed away houses and swamped villages and farmland. That torrent brought with it fears of starvation, prompting the UN to begin shipping aid to the affected areas.

America's **Dow Jones** stock index closed the week above 40,000 for the first time. Markets rallied on Friday amid rumours that the Fed might reduce interest rates earlier than expected. Strong corporate results also pushed share prices higher. America's stockmarkets have been on a tear so far this year. That [may not last](#).

**Slovakia's** prime minister, Robert Fico, is in a stable condition and nearing a "positive prognosis", according to his deputy, Robert Kalinak. Mr Fico was [shot multiple times](#) on Wednesday while greeting constituents in Handlova, a town 140km east of Bratislava, the capital. The country's politics have become increasingly polarised over issues such as corruption and the rule of law.

**Word of the week:** *Berliner Schnauze*, the curt, gruff way that people speak in Germany's capital. [Read the full story](#).

*In the run-up to America's presidential election, we've launched [The US in brief](#)—a daily update to help you keep on top of the political stories that matter. [Sign up here](#) to receive it as a newsletter, each weekday, in your inbox.*



Photo:  APEC Peru 2024

## Talking trade in Peru

Over the weekend trade ministers from the Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation forum (APEC) are meeting in Arequipa, Peru. The 21 member countries account for 62% of the world's GDP and about half of its trade. Tensions between China and the United States, APEC's two behemoths, threaten to dominate the gathering. America, complaining of heavy subsidies, has just [increased tariffs](#) on lots of Chinese goods, including electric vehicles.

But many small member countries want to deepen trade liberalisation, and will find ways to sidestep Sino-American tensions. The host country is convening a session on an important but less controversial matter: women's empowerment through trade. And the 11 APEC countries that in 2018 signed [the CPTPP](#), a big trade deal that does not include America or China, will slip out for their own ministerial meeting. Yet even there the tussling elephants loom large: high on the agenda is whether to accept China's request to join.



Photo: Reuters

## A high-stakes boxing match

Saturday's bout between [Tyson Fury](#) (pictured), a British heavyweight, and Oleksandr Usyk, a Ukrainian, will be boxing's biggest night in almost 25 years. Not since 1999, when Lennox Lewis defeated Evander Holyfield, has one man held all four major titles and earned the right to call himself the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.

One reason for the delay is that it is so infernally difficult for elite boxers and their promoters to settle on acceptable terms for a fight. One big issue is how the prize money is split, a source of contention in negotiations between Mr Fury and Mr Usyk in 2023. It took Saudi money to break the deadlock. As part of a broader splurge on sports, [Saudi Arabia](#) has sought to bring more bouts to its soil. Fury-Usyk will take place in the capital, Riyadh. The winner's next challenge will be holding on to his title. No undisputed champion has made a successful defence since Mr Holyfield, more than 30 years ago.

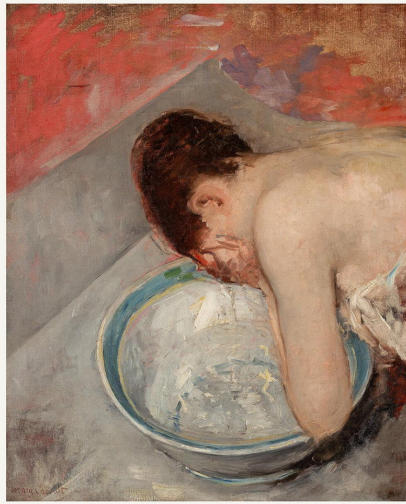


Photo: Philadelphia Museum of Art

## A lesser-seen side of Impressionism

[Impressionism](#), born 150 years ago in France, made the act of seeing its subject. Painters such as Monet and Degas sought to imagine the ideal but to perceive the real. Who sees is important, and one artist was rather different from the rest: Mary Cassatt was one of few women Impressionists, and the only American.

“Mary Cassatt at Work,” the first large exhibition of her work in America in more than 25 years, opens on Saturday at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. It gathers more than 130 of her paintings, prints and drawings, many of which immortalise fleetingly intimate scenes of women and children. The curators present pieces that show how Cassatt attended not just to how women looked, but to what women did—from knitting, washing and mothering to reading and theatre-going. Though none is a self-portrait, these images mirror Cassatt’s own practice. After all, making a work of art is work, too.





Photo: 10th World Water Forum

## Keep the water flowing

Water security is a critical issue for many countries—among them, [Indonesia](#). The World Bank reckons that from 2015 to 2045 the country’s water demand will have increased by 31%, owing to population increase and economic growth. Yet around half of Indonesia’s GDP is produced in areas with a “high or severe” lack of clean water.

The theme of the tenth World Water Forum, which begins on the Indonesian island of Bali on Saturday, is “water for shared prosperity”. It speaks to the host country’s goal of providing safe drinking water to all its people by 2030; today only 11.8% have access. But the country also plans to use the forum—the water sector’s largest international gathering, attended by heads of state—to propose a global fund to finance more water infrastructure, such as dams and pipelines. There will also be some light relief. A water carnival on the beach is scheduled for later in the week.



Photo: EPA

## **Weekend profile: Andrei Belousov, Russia's new defence minister**

On May 12th the Kremlin unexpectedly dismissed Sergei Shoigu as Russia's defence minister after 12 years in post. His replacement is Andrei Belousov, a technocrat with few ties to his country's security bloc. Although the appointment was a surprise, its logic seems clear: Vladimir Putin is [betting on a long war of attrition](#) in Ukraine.

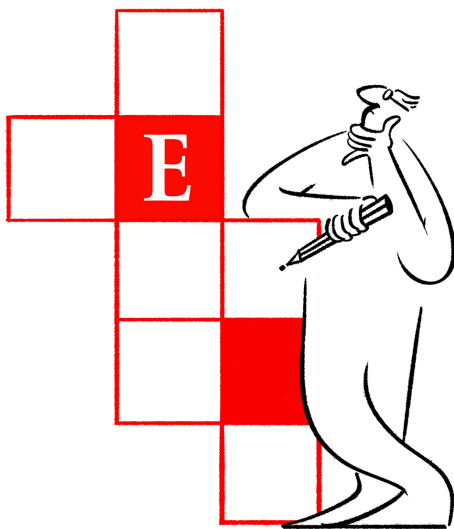
The new defence minister was born in Moscow; his father was an economist, his mother a radiographer. In his youth Mr Belousov is said to have enjoyed martial arts, including karate (these days he supposedly prefers rock climbing). He studied economics and at first pursued a career in academia. He never served in the armed forces and, according to a source close to the Kremlin, will harbour no ambition to direct the fighting.

Mr Belousov joined the government in 2006 as a deputy economics minister. He began working closely with Mr Putin two years later, when he became director of the government's economics department. He was later a minister for economic development, a

presidential aide and, from 2020, a first deputy prime minister. He has a reputation for being one of Mr Putin's acolytes and seems to share the president's worldview. A devout Orthodox Christian, he suggests Russia should defend "traditional" social values.

He is known for his statist economic views and conviction that government intervention spurs growth. In 2018 he controversially promoted the introduction of windfall taxes on Russia's metals and chemical industries. Such ideas may appeal to Mr Putin as he gears Russia's economy towards the war; funding for the armed forces could reach \$120bn this year, a third of all government spending.

Mr Belousov was previously responsible for increasing Russia's production of drones. He also has strong links with officials in China, which has become a [crucial supplier](#) of parts to Russia's arms industry. Mr Putin probably wants a loyal official to quietly expand Russia's defence-industrial base as it tries to out-produce Ukraine and the West. Mr Belousov could be an ideal choice.



## Weekly crossword

Our crossword is designed for experienced cruciverbalists and newcomers alike. Both sets of clues give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of *The Economist*:



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

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*:

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.

## **May 18th edition**

### **Cryptic clues**

*1 down* Engineer tall turbine for high-speed vehicle (6,5)

*1 across* Slightly bashful storyteller backtracking around unknown country (6)

*2 across* Where to post videos of odd thicket (oak) (6)

*3 across* NATO in chaotic state (6)

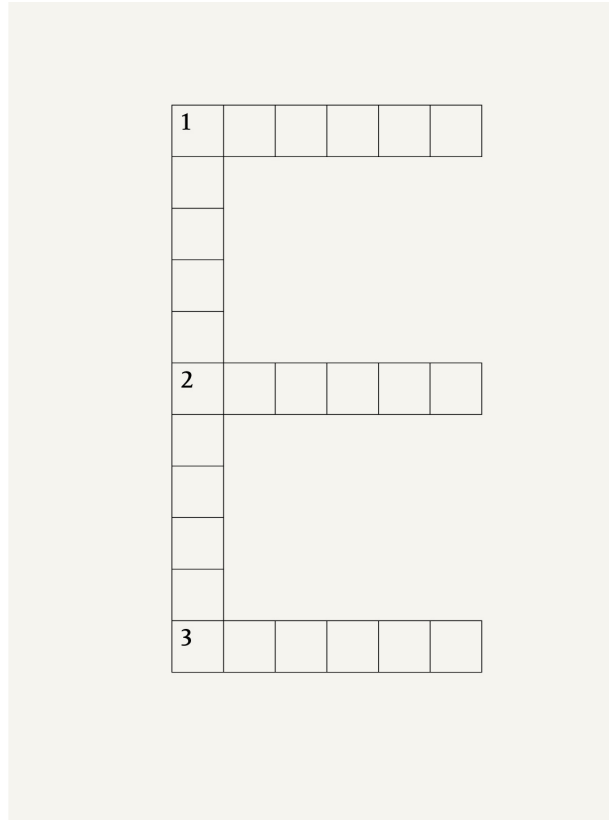
### **Factual clues**

*1 down* What will one day run between Los Angeles and San Francisco (6,5)

*1 across* Country recently battered by torrential rains (6)

*2 across* An app which might soon be banned in America (6)

3 across What should be under threat for an American president to be granted emergency powers (6)



## 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:

**Mary Lou Finlay**, Toronto, Canada

**Romano DePaoli**, Naples, Italy

**Jos**  **Miguel Ried**, Santiago, Chile

They all gave the correct answers of Heath Ledger, Major Tom, Brown, May, and Lyndon Johnson. The theme is post-war British prime ministers: Edward Heath (1970-74), John Major (1990-97), Gordon Brown (2007-10), Theresa May (2016-19) and Boris Johnson (2019-22).

The questions were:

**Monday:** Who played the Joker in the Christopher Nolan film “The Dark Knight”?

**Tuesday:** Which astronaut was the central character in David Bowie’s song “Space Oddity”?

**Wednesday:** Which Ivy League university is based in Providence, Rhode Island?

**Thursday:** In which month do most European countries celebrate Labour day?

**Friday:** Robert Caro has so far written four volumes of biography of which historical figure?

*Tradition is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.*

*Gustav Mahler*