

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

Donald Trump said he had not decided whether to launch land strikes in **Venezuela**, contradicting reports that such attacks were imminent. The *Miami Herald* and *Wall Street Journal* had said the administration was preparing to hit military sites allegedly tied to **drug trafficking**. A White House spokesperson said “unnamed sources don’t know what they’re talking about” and that any decision would come directly from the president.

The United Nations said more than 60,000 people had fled **El-Fasher**, the main city in **Sudan’s** Darfur region. On Friday the Rapid Support Forces, a paramilitary group, **seized** the city, reportedly killing hundreds of civilians. Survivors described fighters rounding up men, hurling racial slurs and opening fire. The RSF has been at war with the national army since 2023.

Dutch media said that the Liberal D66 party had come first in **the Netherlands’ general election**, as the count drew to a close. Only 15,000 votes separate D66 from the hard-right Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, but the ANP news agency said it was no longer possible for the PVV to close the gap.

Samia Suluhu Hassan, the incumbent, was declared the winner of **Tanzania’s** presidential election. The electoral commission, whose

members are picked by the president, said Mrs Samia was re-elected with 98% vote. The commission barred the main opposition from standing. Hundreds of people are reported dead following days of anti-government violence. An internet blackout and curfew are in place.

Scott Bessent, America's treasury secretary, said China "made a real mistake" by threatening to restrict exports of [rare-earth minerals](#). In comments to the *Financial Times* he suggested that America would secure supplies from elsewhere within two years. Meanwhile, Mr Trump suggested that he would lift fentanyl-related tariffs on China if the country cracks down on exports of the drug's chemical ingredients.

France's lower house voted down a wealth tax on the ultra-rich. Socialists had demanded the levy—a 2% tax on individuals' assets worth over €100m—when they agreed to back the centrist prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu. The minority government is [struggling to put together a budget](#). In another compromise the government suspended a pension reform that Emmanuel Macron, France's president, [pushed through](#) in 2023.

China launched three astronauts—and four mice—on the Shenzhou-21 spaceship in the country's latest mission to its [Tiangong space station](#), state media said. Among the crew is Wu Fei, who at 32 is the country's youngest astronaut to go to **space**. The "mice astronauts" will be "raised in orbit" for several days to study "the growth, development and reproduction of living organisms in space".

Word of the week: *Sisu*, a Finnish attitude to life that draws on inner strength and perseverance in the face of adversity. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Reuters

Cluckin' tariffs keep on truckin'

The “chicken tax” is one of America’s more oddly named levies. A 25% tariff that applies to light trucks, it dates back to a 1960s dispute (over frozen poultry) with Europe. On Saturday the brood will grow: Donald Trump plans to add a 25% tariff to heavier trucks, plus 10% on buses. He argues that America’s truck-manufacturing capacity is important to its military preparedness, as well as its industrial base more widely.

The chicken tax has prompted plenty of perversities. For years Ford’s Transit Connect model was manufactured abroad with seats in the back. Customs authorities classified it as a passenger vehicle, subject to much lower tariffs. Ford would then remove the seats and sell it as a light truck. (The automaker was eventually forced to pay fines for tariff evasion.) The levies also add an obstacle for foreign firms hoping to adapt popular designs—such as the diminutive Japanese “Kei” trucks—for America. Expect similar distortions if Mr Trump’s new tariffs stick.



Photograph: Getty Images

Binyamin Netanyahu's domestic dilemma

The Jewish ultra-Orthodox community's exemption [from army conscription](#) has roiled Israeli society for decades, especially over the past two years during [the war in Gaza](#). The issue came to a head again on Thursday, when hundreds of thousands of ultra-Orthodox gathered to protest against the arrest of seminary students who refused to turn up for compulsory military service.

Israel's Supreme Court has ruled the exemptions unconstitutional. But ultra-Orthodox parties are crucial to the coalition of Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's [embattled prime minister](#). Next week his representatives plan to present to the Knesset, Israel's parliament, a draft bill that would make it easier for ultra-Orthodox students to qualify for an exemption, such as by scrapping a proposed conscription quota. It is unlikely to pass. With tensions high, much is at stake for Mr Netanyahu: if he does not find a way to keep his base happy, he could lose his government and finally be forced to bring the election forward.



Photograph: Shutterstock

How to live to 200

If there is a secret to [prolonging life](#), bowhead whales might know it. Found in Arctic waters, they are the longest-living mammals, with lifespans that can exceed 200 years. Their longevity could be down to an enhanced ability to repair damaged DNA, according to a new study led by researchers at the University of Rochester in New York.

All animals accumulate DNA damage over time. If this damage is not repaired, it may result in mutations, which can cause [cancer](#) and other diseases. The researchers found that bowhead-whale cells repair double-strand DNA breaks, the most dangerous type of damage, more effectively than the cells of other mammals, including humans, do. They attributed this to an abundance of an RNA-binding protein induced by cold temperatures, known as CIRBP, that plays an important role in repairing damaged DNA. Their findings could inform future therapies for humans: when the researchers added bowhead-whale CIRBP to human cells, the rate of DNA repair increased.



Photograph: Getty Images

Horse-racing's long-odds quest

In [American horse-racing](#), winning the Grand Slam is tough. It involves securing the Triple Crown (three big races—the Kentucky Derby, the Preakness Stakes and the Belmont Stakes—that take place in the space of five weeks in the summer) and the Breeder's Cup, the latest edition of which begins this weekend, this year in California. Only one horse, [American Pharoah](#), has ever achieved the feat, in 2015.

Recent developments have made the accomplishment almost impossible. Trainers now understand better the toll that races inflict on their horses and are therefore often unwilling to risk their health by running them in all four events. Strategy is also a factor, as many trainers prefer to maximise their chances in fewer races. All this makes horses fresher in the races they do start, increasing competition. History may not be made at this Breeders' Cup, but the racing will be fiercer as a result.



Photograph: Getty Images

Weekend profile: Curtis Sliwa, the mayoral candidate who evokes an older New York

New York City is full of yellow cabs, except when you really need one. Curtis Sliwa felt like he had “hit the lottery” one morning in 1992 when he saw an empty cab near his apartment. The driver even called him by name: Mr Sliwa had been known city-wide since the late 1970s, when [he created the Guardian Angels](#), a citizen-patrol group dedicated to stopping crime on New York’s subway system.

But halfway through the ride, Mr Sliwa explained, “some gorilla pops up” from under the dashboard and starts shooting. Mr Sliwa launched himself through an open window and wound up in intensive care: he had been shot in the stomach and legs. This was days after he came out of a cast following a baseball-bat attack by three men who “rearranged my medulla and cerebellum”.

Mr Sliwa is unlikely to win next Tuesday’s [mayoral election in New York](#). The latest poll shows Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic candidate, with 44% of the vote; he is ten points ahead of Andrew Cuomo, who is running as an independent. Mr Sliwa, the Republican nominee, has just 11%. But he has had a more colourful life than both combined.

Born in 1954, Mr Sliwa was raised in Brooklyn by a merchant-marine father and a dental-technician mother. He was night

manager of a McDonald's restaurant in the Bronx in 1979 when he started the forerunner to the Guardian Angels. More than 1,700 people were murdered in New York that year. Around 250 felonies per week (13,000 per year) occurred in the graffiti-covered subway system. Mr Sliwa and his Angels, conspicuous in their red berets, had some martial-arts training, but carried no weapons when they patrolled the trains. Although plenty of riders welcomed their presence, others thought them ineffective. Ed Koch, the mayor at the time, thought Mr Sliwa was more interested in publicity than in crime-stopping.

Mr Sliwa indeed loves the limelight. He parlayed his Guardian Angels notoriety into a long career hosting radio talk-shows, where he discussed, among other things, "the geriatric, espresso-sipping psychotic killers of organised crime". He had a particular loathing for John Gotti, the boss of the Gambino crime family. (Gotti's son, John junior, was charged with orchestrating the baseball-bat and taxicab attacks on Mr Sliwa but was not convicted.)

With his Italian-American inflections and chin-jutting braggadocio, Mr Sliwa, who now lives on the Upper West Side with his wife and six cats, seems an avatar of an older New York. His pro-cop platform emphasises law and order. His housing policy is anti-developer but pro-landlord—tailor-made for outer-borough neighbourhoods with a lot of single-family homes. He is closing his campaign in places where he is best known: the outer boroughs, the airwaves and the subway. He has faced intense pressure to drop out, even claiming to have been offered \$10m to quit. But he has vowed to fight to the end.

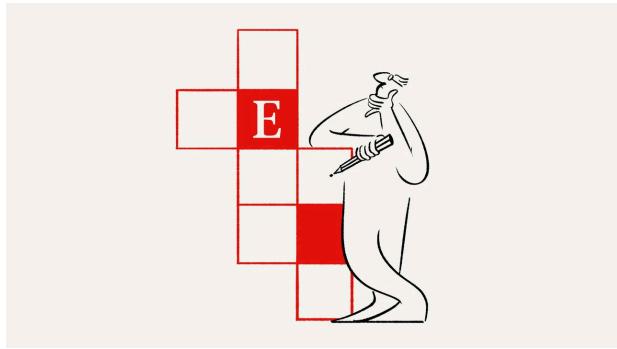


Illustration: The Economist

Mini crossword

We publish a new interactive edition of our crossword daily, allowing you to enter and check the answers and see explanations. Try it [here](#). Or, if you prefer, use the grid below.

There are two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers.

Cryptic clues

1 across - Anxiety in the style of René Magritte, initially (5)

2 across - Film five papers on executive order (5)

3 across - Might get alternative city leader (5)

1 down - Protection from snake bite meant I've no malignancy inside (9)

Straight clues

1 across - Warning klaxon; state of fear (5)

2 across - Visual accompaniment to audio (5)

3 across - Position up for grabs in the city that never sleeps (5)

1 down - Something that can neutralise a snake bite (9)

Email all four answers, along with your home city and country, by 9am GMT on Monday to [\[email protected\]](mailto:). We will pick three winners at random and crown them in Tuesday's edition.

1					
2					
3					



Illustration: The Economist

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:

Tetsuyuki Maruyama, Ito, Japan

Orla McRann, Dublin, Ireland

Michael Zenaitis, Calgary, Canada

They all gave the correct answers of: chicks, sledge, St Andrews, the heart and a pointer. The theme is musical groups with sisters in them: The Chicks (formerly the Dixie Chicks), Sister Sledge, The Andrews Sisters, Heart and the Pointer Sisters

The questions were:

Monday: What is the general term for baby birds?

Tuesday: What British word for a toboggan is also a verb that describes the tactic of insulting sporting opponents?

Wednesday: Which university did Prince William and his wife, Kate, attend?

Thursday: Which human organ is contained within the pericardium?

Friday: Which breed of dog, used to find game, is often called a “bird dog” in the American South?

If you want to gather honey, don't kick over the beehive.

Dale Carnegie