

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

**Ukraine** said that almost all of the prisoners of war returned to it by **Russia** had been tortured, deprived of food and brainwashed. On Saturday, as on Friday, more than 300 soldiers and civilians were returned, as part of a three-day exchange of 1,000 prisoners agreed upon earlier this month. Hours before the swap Russia launched one of its biggest drone and missile attacks yet on Kyiv, leaving at least 15 people injured.

British officials are reportedly investigating whether **Russia** was involved in **arson attacks** on properties connected to Sir Keir Starmer. Earlier this month fires erupted at the British prime minister's family residence and at a home he previously owned. Two Ukrainians and a Romanian were charged. The police said they were part of a broader conspiracy and are exploring whether they were recruited by Russia.

**Gaza's** Hamas-run health ministry said that at least 79 people had died in the territory in the 24 hours up to mid-day Saturday. Among these were nine of the ten children of a doctor, killed after a strike in the city of Khan Younis. The [Israeli Defence Forces](#) have confirmed that they struck more than 100 targets in Gaza during that period, but have yet to comment on the particular incident in Khan Younis.

**India's monsoon** arrived in the south-western state of Kerala eight days earlier than expected. The rains, which are vital to Indian agriculture, started on their earliest date since 2009 and are expected to spread across the country by mid-July. Climate change has made them more unpredictable. Some north-central regions are getting drier, even as other parts of the country are more drenched.

Following an emergency meeting of **Bangladesh's** ruling council, colleagues said Muhammad Yunus, the “chief adviser”—or interim leader—would not carry out rumoured threats to resign. Mr Yunus, who took office after mass protests against the previous government last year, faces pressure from political parties and the army to hold elections this year. He has promised they will be held by June 2026, after [political and electoral reforms](#).

A judge in Boston temporarily blocked the Trump administration's attempt to prevent **Harvard University** from enrolling international students. She said that the move, which Harvard called unconstitutional and politically motivated, would cause “immediate and irreparable injury”. Kristi Noem, America's homeland-security secretary, said her administration was responding to Harvard's failure to provide records on alleged misconduct by foreign students; the [university](#) disputed those claims.

A major power outage in **Cannes** and the surrounding areas of south-eastern France was blamed on damage to an electrical substation by unknown saboteurs. Some events on the last day of the town's famous film festival were affected. But the closing ceremony, where “It Was Just an Accident” was awarded the Palme d'Or, was able to proceed as usual.

**Word of the week:** Chessboxing, a hybrid sport where competitors alternate rounds of chess and boxing, winning by checkmate or knockout. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## **A second term for Ecuador's millennial tough guy**

On Saturday [Daniel Noboa](#), Ecuador's rich 37-year-old president, will be inaugurated for the second time. He first won a snap election in November 2023 and was re-elected last month. His rise reflects Ecuador's rightward turn in the face of spiralling gang violence.

The murder rate in Ecuador rose from about 7 per 100,000 in 2019 to about 46 in 2023. Similarly to [Nayib Bukele](#), El Salvador's president, Mr Noboa has responded with an iron fist—and a slickly produced social-media blitz of him locking up bad guys. He is building maximum-security prisons, has sent Ecuador's military onto the streets and called for soldiers from America, Europe and Brazil to join them.

Unlike many in the region, Mr Noboa is pro-Trump. Critics say abuses of state power are increasing. And, after a dip, the murder rate has [soared again](#). Ecuadorians must hope that he makes real progress on security in his new term without aping the authoritarianism of Mr Bukele.

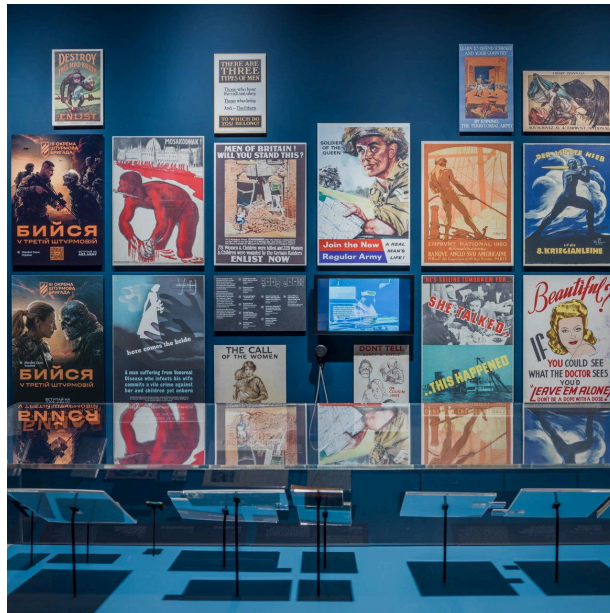


Photograph: AP

## The culture wars reach America's military academies

On Saturday Donald Trump will address graduates of West Point, the us Army's elite academy. The speech comes [amid a war](#) between his administration and America's higher-education institutions: on Thursday the government said it would ban Harvard from enrolling foreign students; it has already [cancelled federal funding](#). West Point has been spared the threat of budget cuts, but Mr Trump has meddled in its teaching.

An executive order Mr Trump issued in January prohibited military academies from promoting “un-American” concepts like “gender ideology” or the notion that the country's founding documents are “racist or sexist”. Pete Hegseth, the defence secretary, has [long complained](#) that diversity initiatives undermine combat standards. The us Naval Academy chucked nearly 400 titles—about racism, the Holocaust and sexuality, among other topics—from its library ahead of a visit from Mr Hegseth in April. And earlier this month the *New York Times* reported that West Point professors dropped from their curricula unpleasant chapters from American history.



Photograph: IWM

## A groundbreaking exhibition on sexual violence

The Imperial War Museum in London was founded in 1917. More than a century later, it is for the first time staging an exhibition on one of the most [devastating aspects of war](#). “Uns silenced: Sexual Violence in Conflict” is the first such show in Britain, and possibly the world.

There were roughly 2m instances of rape committed by Soviet Union’s Red Army after the defeat of Germany in 1945, for example. But as the exhibition demonstrates, sexual violence comes in other, less obvious, forms. Drawing on the museum’s huge collection of objects and visual records, the curators include, for instance, the sexual and physical abuse of child evacuees in Britain during the second world war. The sexual humiliation of Iraqi male prisoners in [Abu Ghraib](#) prison by American guards is also recorded. “Uns silenced” ends by showcasing the work of four NGOs seeking to bring perpetrators to justice in contemporary conflicts. It is distressing, but necessary, viewing.





Photograph: Getty Images

## Rugby's new superstars

France is the dominant force in [European](#) rugby union. Teams from the country have won the Champions Cup, the continent's premier club competition, the past four seasons. And a French side, Union Bordeaux Bègles, are favourites to win this year's final against Northampton Saints, an English club, in Cardiff on Saturday too. Bordeaux's squad boasts one of the sport's finest prospects: Louis Bielle-Biarrey, a pacey 21-year-old winger who is already breaking scoring records.

Still, Northampton have a young superstar of their own. A year ago Henry Pollock was watching the club's matches as a fan in the stands. Now the 20-year-old is one of the side's most important players and an England international. What's more, he was recently picked for the British & Irish Lions, a squad of the best English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh players that goes on tour every four years. Winning such a call-up is among the sport's greatest achievements. Mr Pollock made it look easy.



Photograph: Enhanced Games

## **Weekend profile: Aron D'Souza, the brash brain behind the “doping Olympics”**

Aron D'Souza frames the future in epic terms. Last year, at a conference in Oxford on [human enhancement](#), the lawyer and entrepreneur reminded the crowd that seemingly timeless institutions and norms, whether the United Nations, liberal democracy or human rights, “are the creation of men, not gods”.

His critics might accuse him of playing God. The trim, 40-year-old Australian is founder and president of the forthcoming [Enhanced Games](#), which have been dubbed the “doping Olympics”. Athletes will be able to earn up to \$1m for breaking world records using the sorts of drugs that would normally disqualify them. The first games, it was announced this week, are planned for Las Vegas in 2026.

He relishes battling critics who predict that the games will be dangerous or unfair. He points out that conventional athletics is rife with secret and unsafe doping practices.

His style is less that of a CEO than that of the founder of a movement. He sees the games as a catalyst for changing the very trajectory of humanity and altering the boundaries of what it means to be human. He wants people to expect to improve themselves beyond what would be possible in nature, describing it as a human right. The games are just the first step. They coincide with [rising interest](#) in consumer-health, longevity and enhancement products. Many worry, though, that this sort of shift in consumer and sporting behaviour will push young people to make ill-informed choices about their bodies.

If Mr D'Souza's bravado sounds straight out of Silicon Valley, that is no coincidence. While a law student at Oxford, he met Peter Thiel, a tech billionaire and one of the founders of PayPal. He boldly asked how he could help Mr Thiel solve his biggest challenge. That question changed Mr D'Souza's trajectory: he led the litigation in what became a landmark privacy case against Gawker, a scrappy media outlet that had outed Mr Thiel as gay. Mr Thiel is now a prominent backer of the Enhanced Games. (So is Donald Trump junior, the president's son.)

Despite superhuman ambitions, Mr D'Souza admits that travel and jet lag take their toll on him. During sleepless nights in anonymous hotel rooms he wonders whether he is doing the right thing. He muses that he could be at home in a swanky part of London with his new husband, or perhaps driving his Ferrari. But he believes it would be "a moral failure" if he opted not to use his gifts "to advance humanity".





Illustration: The Economist

## Weekly crossword

We now publish an interactive edition of our crossword twice a week, allowing you to enter and check the answers, and see explanations, instantly. [Try it here](#). Or, if you prefer to do things the old-fashioned way, use the grid below.

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 across* City's fashionable in the past (7)

*2 across* Wordsmith is gold deity (6)

*3 across* In the style of pale-sounding religious minority (7)

*1 down* Armchair play so confusing for president (5,9)

### Factual clues

*1 across* American city apocryphally named for its “windbag” politicians (7)

*2 across* Novelist or originator of something (6)

*3 across* Member of a minority sect of Islam living chiefly in Syria (7)

*1 down* Latest leader to be ambushed at the White House (5,9)

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

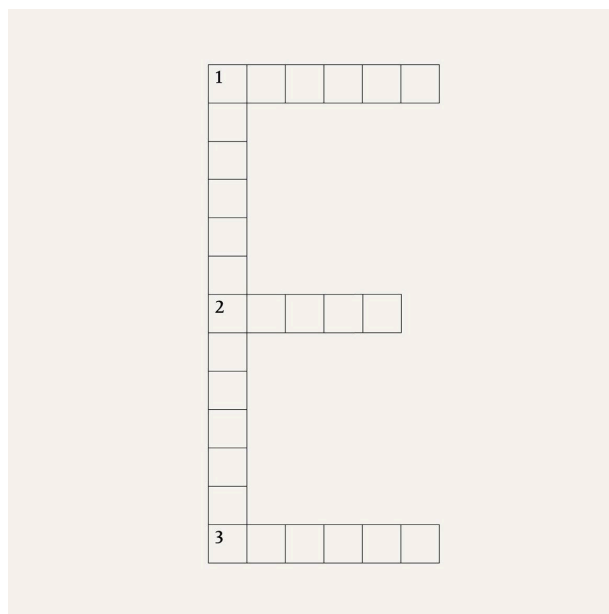


Image: .



## **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:

**Felipe de Gamboa**, Bogotá, Colombia

**Susan Smolinsky**, Baton Rouge, Louisiana, America

**Corina Roeder**, Oslo, Norway

They all gave the correct answers of: Doug Ross, Jackie Robinson, Marvin, Jackson Pollock and Wonder Boys. The theme is Motown artists: Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, the Jackson 5 (or Michael Jackson) and Stevie Wonder.

The questions were:

**Monday:** Which character did George Clooney play in *ER*?

**Tuesday:** Who was the first African-American to win the "most valuable player" award in Major League Baseball?

**Wednesday:** What was the name of the "paranoid android" in "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy" series?

**Thursday:** Which American painter was nicknamed “Jack the Dripper” for his style?

**Friday:** Which Michael Chabon novel was turned into a 2000 film starring Michael Douglas?

*The stupidity of men always  
invites the insolence of power.*

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***Ralph Waldo Emerson***