

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

**Israel's** armed forces said they had begun “extensive ground operations” in Gaza. The move follows days of Israeli air strikes, which killed 135 people overnight on May 17th-18th, according to Palestinian officials. Renewed ceasefire talks in Qatar have so far made little progress. Earlier, Israel said that its negotiators would aim to end the fighting while securing the “release of all hostages”, the “exile of Hamas terrorists” and the “disarmament” of Gaza.

**Russia** launched its biggest drone attack on Ukraine so far, the Ukrainian air force said. Russia fired 273 drones at the region around Kyiv, Ukraine's capital, as well as at Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk in the east. The strikes killed one person and wounded several others. Earlier **Donald Trump** said he would call his Russian counterpart, **Vladimir Putin**, on Monday in an effort to end the “bloodbath”.

**Pope Leo XIV** held his inaugural mass in St Peter's Square, an event that officially started his papacy. Before the service Leo greeted the large crowds at the Vatican. World leaders, including Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, and America's vice-president, J.D. Vance, were in attendance. Leo is the [first American pope](#).

Voting began in the second round of **Romania's** presidential election. [George Simion](#), leader of the hard-right Alliance for the Unions of Romanians, easily won the first round on May 4th. His opponent in the run-off is Nicusor Dan, the liberal mayor of Bucharest. Romania's constitutional court annulled the initial presidential vote, held in November, on suspicion that Russia had meddled to help another hard-right candidate.

Two people died and at least 19 were injured when a Mexican navy tall ship crashed into **Brooklyn Bridge** in New York. Some of the ship's masts snapped, falling onto deck. Officials said a mechanical problem on the *ARM Cuauhtémoc* was probably to blame. The busy bridge has since reopened.

Mr Trump told **Walmart**, the [world's largest retailer](#), to "EAT THE TARIFFS". This was his response to Walmart's announcement that it would soon raise prices to cope with the global levies imposed by the Trump administration. Walmart's boss had called the tariffs "too high" and warned that it would need to protect its small profit margins. The president retorted that the retailer made "billions of dollars" last year.

Austria won **Eurovision**, a gaudy continental song contest that took place in Switzerland this year. "Wasted Love", sung by JJ, had been behind Israel's entry until the final vote of the evening. Staff thwarted protestors who tried to disrupt the performance of [Israel's](#) song by Yuval Raphael, a survivor of the Hamas attacks of October 7th 2023.

**Word of the week:** *amphidromia*, an ancient Greek ceremony during which the father decided whether to keep a baby, or abandon it on a hillside. It's better being a dad now. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## A real choice in Poland

Law and Justice was booted out of power in [Poland](#) in 2023, but it has kept a foothold in the presidential palace. That has allowed the national-conservative party to frustrate the new government's liberal agenda by blocking some two dozen of its laws and obstructing the appointment of judges and ambassadors. The impasse could soon end. Poles vote in the first round of a presidential election on Sunday.

Leading the polls is Rafal Trzaskowski, Warsaw's mayor, backed by the ruling Civic Coalition (KO). He has promised to approve government reforms of courts and public media—though progress on these has also been delayed by squabbles within KO's unwieldy alliance. Trailing him by around six percentage points is the continuity candidate of the populist right, Karol Nawrocki. A gaggle of eleven follows. In such a crowded field, neither Mr Trzaskowski nor Mr Nawrocki is likely to gain the majority of votes needed for an outright victory. They will probably face one another in a run-off on June 1st.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Portugal votes, again

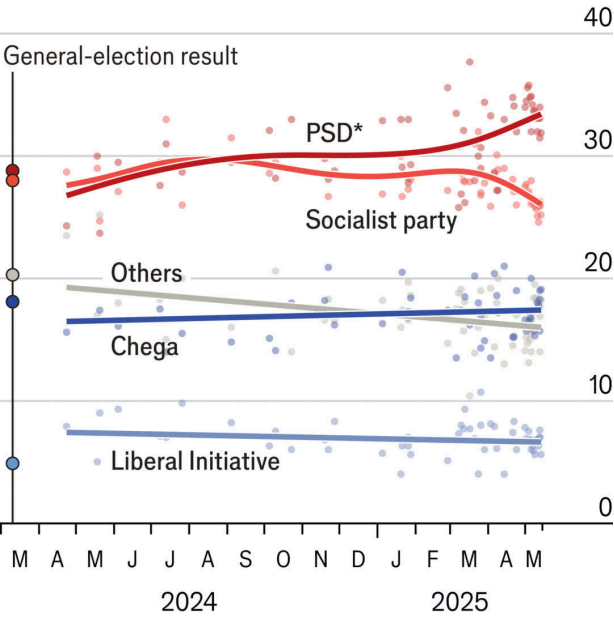
On Sunday the [Portuguese](#) will vote for a government for the third time in a little over three years. The election came about when Luís Montenegro, the centre-right prime minister for the past year, lost a confidence motion in parliament. His family's consulting firm had received a monthly fee from a company seeking to renew a government concession to run some casinos.

Polls suggest voters are not much bothered by that scandal and that his coalition may win more than the 29% of votes it scraped last year. Portuguese will pay close attention to whether or not Chega ("Enough!"), a hard-right outfit, improves on its 18%. Mr Montenegro rules out a coalition with them and may again have to depend on the opposition Socialists.

While the country has enjoyed healthy economic growth, many Portuguese are angry about a housing shortage and a creaking health service. To fix them, they need a stronger and more durable government.

All rather tricky

Portugal, general-election voting intention, %



Source: National polls

\*Includes CDS



Photograph: AP

## Israel's precarious economy

On Sunday [Israel](#) will release GDP data, expected to show that the economy grew at an annualised rate of 2.1% in the first three months of 2025. This is strong compared with most rich countries. It is also an improvement on 2024, when the economy grew by a sluggish 1%.

However, optimism should be guarded. Israelis have one of the highest birth-rates in the developed world. When adjusted to population growth—which in 2024 was 1.4%—the economy is hardly growing. The war has brought short-term boosts due to a sharp rise in government expenditure and a drop in unemployment, as young people are called up to reserve duty. But in the long term, these things will be bad for Israel's economy. There is a cost to splurging on weapons and paying reservists to fight instead of working in the most productive sectors. With prospects for a ceasefire in Gaza still unclear, Israel is far from economic recovery.





Photograph: Reuters

## **The work begins for Pope Leo**

[Pope Leo XIV](#) was in St Peter's square on Sunday for a mass celebrating the formal start of his papacy. The event also closed the cycles of ceremony that began with the death of his predecessor, Francis, on Easter Monday.

But the new pope had already started working. One of his first meetings, on Wednesday, was with Cardinal Seán O'Malley, head of the Vatican commission responsible for tackling clerical sex abuse. It raised hopes that Leo will be more effective in his approach than his predecessor, although his own previous handling of cases involving alleged offenders has been criticised.

Leo is expected to soon make his first trip abroad as pope, to Turkey, to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, a milestone in the definition of Christian doctrine. While there, he may also meet the leader of the Eastern Orthodox church, Patriarch Bartholomew.



Illustration: The Economist

## This week's 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 down* Fair or incorrect? Crime without limit, only this moves Donald Trump (3,5,3)

*1 across* In part to outflank a rascal, Zelensky headed here (6)

*2 across* Far out! Before a beer, Pakistan soldiers claimed they downed this (6)

*3 across* A dedication to European science, perhaps (6)

### Factual clues



*1 down* Presidential plane at the centre of a corruption storm (3,5,3)  
*1 across* The city in which Volodymyr Zelensky met Recep Tayyip Erdogan this week (6)  
*2 across* French-made warplane that Pakistan claims to have shot down (6)  
*3 across* A tribute to someone who died (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.

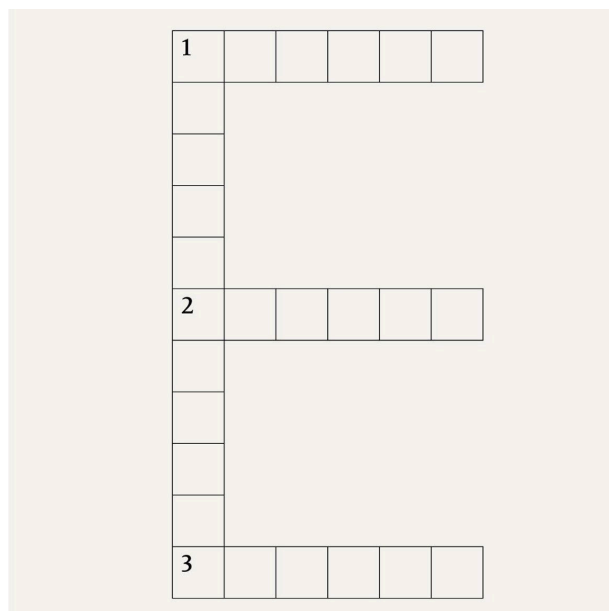


Image: The Economist



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:

**Jaci Noel**, Phoenix, Arizona, United States

**Hélène Tremblay**, Gatineau, Canada

**Carlos Sangil**, Madrid, Spain

They all gave the correct answers of Bonnie Prince Charlie, Giant, Fox News, a peach and Waltzing Matilda. The theme is books by Roald Dahl: Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, the BFG (Big Friendly Giant), Fantastic Mr Fox, James and the Giant Peach and Matilda.

The questions were:

**Monday:** What popular nickname was attached to the member of the Stuart family who led the Jacobite rebellion in Britain in 1745?

**Tuesday:** What was the last film made by James Dean before he was killed in a car crash?

**Wednesday:** Roger Ailes was the long-term head of which cable news network?

**Thursday:** The state of Georgia has a nickname associated with which fruit?

**Friday:** Which traditional Australian song begins with the line “Once a jolly swagman camped by a billabong”?

*Although this may seem a paradox, all exact science is dominated by the idea of approximation.*

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***Bertrand Russell***