



## **Thai-Cambodian conflict pits a well-equipped US ally against a weaker adversary with strong China links**

The leaders of Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to meet to negotiate a ceasefire, according to a social media post by United States President Donald Trump on Saturday. Trump, who said he held separate calls with the Prime Minister of Cambodia and acting Prime Minister of Thailand, claimed that both countries, “have agreed to immediately meet and quickly work out a Ceasefire and, ultimately, PEACE!”

The news came shortly after Trump called publicly on both parties to negotiate peace amid escalating violence on the disputed border between Thailand and Cambodia. Bangkok and Phnom Penh have been fighting over territory disputed since colonial power France drew the border between them more than a century ago. The renewed deadly conflict pits longtime US ally Thailand, with decades of experience, against Cambodia’s relatively young armed force with close ties to China.

Since fighting broke out on Thursday, more than a dozen people have been reported killed, dozens wounded, and more than 150,000 civilians evacuated. Clashes have continued into Saturday, according to officials on both sides.

### **Numbers favor Thailand**

Thailand’s military dwarfs that of neighboring Cambodia, both in personnel and weaponry. Thailand’s total of 361,000 active-duty personnel spread across all branches of the kingdom’s military is three times Cambodia’s. And those troops have at their disposal weaponry their Cambodian counterparts could only dream of.

“Thailand has a large, well-funded military and its air force is one of the best equipped and trained in Southeast Asia,” the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) wrote in its “Military Balance 2025” look at the world’s armed forces. Meanwhile, a 2024 ranking of the military capabilities of 27 regional nations by the Lowy Institute places Thailand at 14th, to Cambodia’s 23rd.

Such a disparity is perhaps to be expected, given Thailand has four times as many people as Cambodia, and a GDP more than 10 times larger. Unlike Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, it escaped the ravages of the wars that engulfed the region in the second half of the 20th century, and the European colonialism that preceded them.

Overall, with factors including military, economic, diplomatic and cultural power weighed in the Lowy Asia Power Index, Thailand is ranked 10th, considered a middle power, just behind Indonesia but ahead of countries including Malaysia and Vietnam. Lowy ranks Cambodia as a minor power in Asia, grouped with countries such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Laos. In an earlier Truth Social post on Saturday, Trump said he has spoken to the acting prime minister of Thailand, Phumtham Wechayachai.

“I have just spoken to the Acting Prime Minister of Thailand, and it was a very good conversation,” he wrote. “Thailand, like Cambodia, wants to have an immediate Ceasefire, and PEACE. I am now going to relay that message back to the Prime Minister of Cambodia. After



speaking to both Parties, Ceasefire, Peace, and Prosperity seems to be a natural. We will soon see!”

### **Thailand has strong US ties, global outlook**

Thailand’s military has long been a major player in the kingdom’s politics. The country has for years been dominated by a conservative establishment comprising the military, the monarchy and influential elites. Generals have seized power in 20 coups since 1932, often toppling democratic governments, according to the CIA World Factbook, and the military portrays itself as the ultimate defender of the monarchy.

Thailand is a United States treaty ally, a status dating back to the signing of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty, also known as the Manila Pact, in 1954, according to the US State Department. During the Vietnam War, Thailand hosted US Air Force assets at some air bases, including B-52 bombers, and tens of thousands Thai troops fought on the side of the US-backed South Vietnam against the communist North.

Strong ties between Washington and Bangkok have endured. Thailand is classed as a major non-NATO ally by the US, giving it special benefits that have enabled it to enjoy access to decades of US support for its weapons programs. Thailand and the US Indo-Pacific Command co-host the annual Cobra Gold military exercise, which began in 1982 as joint drills with the US but has since added dozens of other participants. It’s the longest-running international military exercise in the world, according to the US military.

Besides Cobra Gold, Thai and US forces hold more than 60 exercises together, and more than 900 US aircraft and 40 Navy ships visit Thailand yearly, the US State Department says. Despite all that history with Washington, these days the Thai military tries to maintain a more neutral approach to military policy, increasing ties with China in the past decade. Not wanting to rely on any one country as its arms supplier, it has also developed a strong domestic weapons industry, with the help of countries such as Israel, Italy, Russia, South Korea and Sweden, the “Military Balance” report says.

### **Cambodia’s Chinese support**

Cambodia’s military is young in comparison to Thailand’s, established in 1993 after forces of the communist government were merged with two non-communist resistance armies, according to the IISS. “Cambodia’s most important international defense links are with China and Vietnam. Despite a traditional reliance on Russia for defense equipment, China has emerged as a key supplier,” the IISS says.

Beijing has even developed a naval base in Cambodia. The Ream Naval Base, on the Gulf of Thailand, would be able to host Chinese aircraft carriers, according to international analysts. Cambodia and China completed the seventh edition of their annual Golden Dragon joint military exercise in May, which was touted as the largest ever and featured live-fire training scenarios. It’s a relationship that’s expected to reach “a new level and achieve new development” this year, according to a February report on the People’s Liberation Army’s English-language website.



“China and Cambodia are iron-clad friends who... always support each other. The two militaries enjoy unbreakable relations and rock-solid brotherhood,” Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Senior Col. Wu Qian told a press conference in February, when asked about possible fissures in relations. Cambodia’s military needs the support. “Cambodia currently lacks the ability to design and manufacture modern equipment for its armed forces,” the IISS report says.

### **Weapons on each side**

Bolstered by years of US support, the Royal Thai Air Force is well equipped, with at least 11 modern Swedish Gripen fighter jets and dozens of older, US-made F-16 and F-5 jets, according to the IISS. Cambodia has no combat-capable air force to speak of. On the ground, Thailand has dozens of battle tanks, including 60 modern, Chinese-made VT-4 tanks, and hundreds of older, US-made tanks. Cambodia has about 200 old Chinese- and Soviet-made tanks, the “Military Balance” shows.

The Thai army boasts more than 600 artillery pieces, including at least 56 powerful 155mm weapons and more than 550 105mm towed guns. Cambodia has only a dozen 155mm guns with around 400 smaller towed artillery pieces, according to IISS figures. In the air, the army has US-made Cobra attack helicopters as well as 18 US Black Hawk transports. Cambodia has only a few dozen older Soviet and Chinese transport helicopters.

### **What comes next**

Hawaii-based military analyst Carl Schuster, a former director of operations at the US Pacific Command’s Joint Intelligence Center, said that while Thailand has the numerical and qualitative military advantage, Cambodia has at least one thing in its favor – the actual land along the disputed border. “Terrain favors access from Cambodian territory to the disputed area,” Schuster told CNN.

And with Cambodian forces allegedly laying landmines and booby traps in the disputed area, Thailand can be expected to rely on longer-range weaponry, he said.

“The Royal Thai Air Force is superior and their special forces are superior,” Schuster said. “I think the Thais will prefer to emphasize air power and long-range firepower in the conflict.”

Source: [Thai-Cambodian conflict pits a well-equipped US ally against a weaker adversary with strong China links](#)



## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Escalating :
2. Disputed :
3. Dwarfs :
4. Personnel :
5. Weaponry :
6. Capabilities :
7. Disparity :
8. Ravages :
9. Establishment :
10. Monarchy :
11. Coups :
12. Endured :
13. Co-host :
14. Domestic :
15. Resistance :
16. Reliance :
17. Touted :
18. Fissures :
19. Numerical :
20. Qualitative :



## **Violence is flaring again on the Thai-Cambodian border. Why is it so contentious?**

Deadly violence has flared up once again on the contentious border between Thailand and Cambodia, reigniting a long-running but little-known dispute. Thailand deployed fighter jets against Cambodian military targets on Thursday, as forces from both countries clashed along the border. The escalation came after a second Thai soldier in a week lost their leg in a landmine explosion.

Diplomatic relations have deteriorated as a full-blown conflict threatens to break out, as both sides accuse each other of aggression. Thailand's health ministry said Thursday that 12 people, including 11 civilians and one Thai soldier, have been killed in clashes with Cambodian troops. A further 31 people have been injured, the ministry said. Cambodian authorities have not yet reported any fatalities on their side.

### **What caused the latest flare-up?**

Tensions worsened in May when a Cambodian soldier was killed during a brief clash between Thai and Cambodian troops in a contested border area of the Emerald Triangle, where Cambodia, Thailand and Laos meet. Thai and Cambodian forces said they were acting in self-defense and blamed the other for the skirmish.

Although military leaders from Thailand and Cambodia said they wished to de-escalate, both sides have since engaged in saber-rattling and reinforced troops along the border. Thailand took control of border checkpoints, imposed restrictions on crossings and threatened to cut electricity and internet to Cambodia's border towns. Cambodia in return stopped imports of Thai fruit and vegetables and banned Thai movies and TV dramas.

Recent landmine explosions prompted both countries to downgrade relations with each other and recall diplomatic staff. The first soldier lost his leg in a landmine explosion on July 16. The second incident occurred Wednesday, when a blast injured five Thai soldiers, with one losing his leg. Thursday's violence marked a significant escalation.

### **Why is the border disputed?**

Thailand and Cambodia have had a complicated relationship of both cooperation and rivalry in recent decades. The two countries share a 508-mile (817-kilometer) land border – largely mapped by the French when they controlled Cambodia as a colony – that has periodically seen military clashes and been the source of political tensions.

Cambodia has previously sought a ruling from the UN's International Court of Justice over disputed areas, including the site of the most recent clash. However, Thailand does not recognize the ICJ's jurisdiction and claims that some areas along the border were never fully demarcated, including the sites of several ancient temples.

In 2011, Thai and Cambodian troops clashed in a nearby area surrounding the 11th-century Preah Vihear temple, a UNESCO world heritage site, displacing thousands of people on both sides and killing at least 20 people.



### **What has been the fallout?**

The flare-up in May has had huge political ramifications in Thailand. Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was suspended from duties in July after the leak of a phone call she had with Cambodia's powerful former leader Hun Sen, in which she appeared to criticize her own army's actions in the dispute.

Paetongtarn hails from a powerful dynasty and became Thailand's youngest prime minister last year, at just 38. She could face full dismissal over the 17-minute phone call – in which she appeared to signal there was discord between her government and the powerful Thai military. The scandal and her suspension brought fresh uncertainty to the Southeast Asian kingdom, which has been roiled by years of political turbulence and leadership shake-ups.

### **What are authorities saying now?**

Both sides' forces accuse each other of opening fire Thursday morning. Cambodia then fired rockets on Thai soil, Thailand said. A Thai fighter jet later dropped two bombs in Cambodian territory, Cambodia said. Cambodia's Defense Ministry condemned what it called "brutal, barbaric, and violent military aggression," accusing Thailand of violating international law. The ministry said a Thai F-16 had dropped two bombs on a road near the ancient Preah Vihear temple, a UNESCO world heritage site.

"Cambodia reserves the right to lawful self-defense and will respond decisively to Thailand's violent aggression," the statement said, adding that the armed forces are "fully prepared to defend the kingdom's sovereignty and its people – whatever the cost." Thailand's 2nd regional military command in the northeast said that F-16 fighter jets had been deployed in two areas, and it claimed to have "destroyed" two Cambodian regional military support units. Army spokesperson Col. Richa Sukswanont said the strikes were aimed only at military targets.

Thailand's acting caretaker, Prime Minister Phumtham Wechayachai, said Cambodia fired heavy weapons into Thailand without clear targets, leading to civilian deaths. The acting premier also said the conflict was not spreading into more provinces, according to Reuters. He added that no negotiation with Cambodia can take place until fighting along the border ends.

Other countries have also weighed in, urging restraint and warning travelers against approaching the contentious border. At a briefing on Thursday, US State Department spokesperson Tommy Pigott told reporters that the US is "gravely concerned" about the violence. "The United States urges an immediate cessation of hostilities, protection of civilians, and a peaceful resolution of the conflicts," Pigott said.

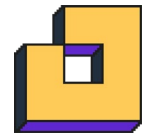
Additionally on Thursday, the United Kingdom's Foreign Ministry advised against "all but essential travel" within 50 kilometers of the Cambodia-Thailand border in either country.

Source: [Violence is flaring again on the Thai-Cambodian border. Why is it so contentious?](#)



## **Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!**

1. Contentious :
2. Reigniting :
3. Deployed :
4. Escalation :
5. Deteriorated :
6. Fatalities :
7. Skirmish :
8. Escalate :
9. Rattling :
10. Reinforced :
11. Jurisdiction :
12. Demarcated :
13. Displacing :
14. Ramifications :
15. Suspended :
16. Discord :
17. Turbulence :
18. Barbaric :
19. Sovereignty :
20. Cessation :



## **Taiwan is paralyzed by political gridlock. A mass recall of 'pro-China' lawmakers could break that**

Giant yellow trucks decked with bears sipping boba tea and broadcasting lawmaker speeches, emotional rallies featuring rock bands and rival political camps jostling for support outside metro stations – Taiwan is in the midst of what feels like a full-swing election. But this passionate political theatre is not to elect lawmakers. Instead it is an attempt to unseat them, using an unusual quirk of Taiwan's democratic system – a recall vote.

This Saturday, Taiwan goes to the ballot box to decide whether 24 lawmakers from the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) – around 20 percent of Taiwan's legislature – can keep their jobs. Seven more seats are to be voted on next month. The outcome could reshape Taiwan's political landscape, allowing the ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) to recapture a majority in the legislature, currently controlled by its opponents the KMT and the smaller Taiwan's People Party (TPP).

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te, who has struggled to get his agenda through parliament, has endorsed the recall as he tries to keep relations onside with the United States and counter growing threats from China.

### **What is this recall all about?**

Taiwan's constitution allows for lawmakers to be put to a recall vote after their first year in office if at least 10 percent of registered voters in their constituency sign a petition. It is a system that makes recalls quite common, but this is a record number of recalls for the island. Supporters of the recall movement have portrayed their campaign as "anti-communist," seeking to get rid of "pro-China" opposition KMT lawmakers they perceive as collaborators of Beijing's ruling Communist Party, which vows to "reunify" Taiwan, by force if necessary.

They say the opposition has undermined democratic institutions and national security by obstructing Lai's administration, strong-arming controversial laws, freezing defense spending and imposing budget cuts. They also accuse the KMT of quietly "colluding" with Beijing, citing – for example – a meeting last April between a KMT congressional delegation and Wang Huning, China's top official on Taiwan affairs.

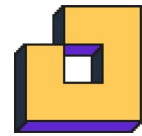
But campaigners have provided little hard evidence. While one KMT lawmaker facing recall is being investigated for allegedly receiving Chinese funding, no incumbents have been indicted on national security offenses. The KMT has rejected these accusations and decried the recall as an abuse of Taiwan's democratic rules, arguing it is a power grab attempt.

At a rally this month, KMT chairman Eric Chu called President Lai a "dictator." "The recall is totally unconstitutional and undemocratic," said KMT vice chairperson Andrew Hsia. "It is important for any democracy to maintain check and balance."

### **What's at stake?**

At the heart of this political fracas is two competing visions for Taiwan and the island's relationship with China. The ruling DPP party is openly loathed by Beijing, which has cut off all official communication with Taipei since they came to office. The DPP views Taiwan as





separate from China and has seen repeated success in recent years at general elections, especially among younger voters.

The KMT favors warmer ties with Beijing and sees Taiwan as part of a “one China,” though both sides agreed to disagree what that China means. China’s Communist leadership is far more willing to talk to the KMT. The result of the recall will determine whether Lai and his ruling DPP can implement policies that will shore up US support, or whether he becomes a lame duck president that can’t get much done.

Taiwan has been paralyzed by a political gridlock, with disagreements in parliament turning into brawls at times, hampering Lai’s ability to push forward agenda items, including those that address key US concerns over Taiwan. In a bid to allay Washington’s concern on security costs, Lai announced that Taiwan will increase its defense spending from 2.5% of its gross domestic product to more than 3 percent. But his lack of a majority in parliament may complicate efforts to achieve that.

Lev Nachman, a political science professor at the National Taiwan University, says the recall result will significantly impact what Lai can do. “Most importantly, this is going to involve questions of defense spending and how the US-Taiwan relationship is going to proceed,” Nachman told CNN. The KMT has long maintained that they support enhancing Taiwan’s defense capabilities but argued for prudence to curb wastefulness and ensure the efficacy of weapon programs.

### **Relations with US and China**

In recent years, China has ramped up military, diplomatic and economic pressure on Taiwan, sending fighter jets and warships around the island on an almost daily basis and looking to squeeze its presence on the world stage. The recall vote comes as Taiwan works to beef up its defenses against an increasingly aggressive China and show an openly transactional Trump administration that it is doing its fair share to pay for US support.

The US and other western nations have grown increasingly concerned over whether Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s vow to “reunify” Taiwan might lead one day to a devastating invasion. Key China hawks in the Trump administration, including US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth and Vice President JD Vance, have pushed for Washington to spend less time and resources in Europe and focus instead on countering China in Asia. But the Trump administration has also been pushing all allies and supporters in Asia to pay more for US protection.

The result of the recall could also impact Lai’s standing with the Trump administration during a highly-anticipated and sensitive transit stopover in the US next month while on his way to visiting Paraguay, one of Taiwan’s few remaining diplomatic allies.

“If the recalls flop and the DPP is not successful, the KMT is going to feel very empowered, and President Lai will be in a much less strong position going on these transit tours,” Nachman said.

### **What might happen?**

President Lai’s DPP party currently control just 51 seats in Taiwan’s 113 seat legislature.



If KMT lawmakers lose their seats, by-elections must be held within three months. That could then provide the DPP an opening to win back enough seats to reclaim a parliamentary majority. The DPP would need to win at least six seats in the by-elections to meet the 57-seat majority threshold. But if they oust enough lawmakers – 12 – they could gain a majority immediately, even before the by-elections take place.

A successful recall would empower Lai. “He is going to feel that he has the mandate to push his policy agenda, in whatever manner he thinks to be appropriate,” added Nachman.

Source: [Taiwan is paralyzed by political gridlock. A mass recall of ‘pro-China’ lawmakers could break that](#)



## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Lawmaker :
2. Rallies :
3. Unseat :
4. Quirk :
5. Legislature :
6. Recapture :
7. Endorsed :
8. Constituency :
9. Petition :
10. Collaborators :
11. Obstructing :
12. Incumbents :
13. Indicted :
14. Decried :
15. Fracas :
16. Gridlock :
17. Hampering :
18. Prudence :
19. Transactional :
20. Elections :



## **Indian and Chinese travelers hail end of visa freeze between world's two most populous nations as diplomatic tensions thaw**

They are the two most populous countries in the world and neighbors clamoring for more tourists, but for much of the last five years it has been difficult for Indian and Chinese nationals to vacation in each other's nations. Now that looks set to finally change as previous fractious relations between the two Asian giants finally begin to thaw.

India will issue tourist visas for Chinese citizens for the first time in five years, allowing nationals from its neighboring country to freely visit each other, marking a significant reset in relations after a deadly border clash sent ties into a deep freeze. From Thursday, July 24, Chinese citizens can apply for tourist visas to India, the Indian embassy in Beijing said Wednesday.

This "positive news" is in the "common interests of all parties," China's foreign spokesperson Guo Jiakun said. "China is willing to maintain communication and consultation with India to continuously improve the level of facilitation of personnel exchanges between the two countries." There has been a gradual normalization of ties between India and China in recent months after relations were deeply strained in June 2020, when a brutal hand-to-hand battle in the Galwan Valley left at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers dead.

Both nations maintain a heavy military presence along their 2,100-mile (3,379-kilometer) de facto border, known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC) – a boundary that remains undefined and has been a persistent source of friction since their bloody 1962 war. The 2020 clash in the disputed region between Indian Ladakh and Chinese-controlled Aksai Chin marked the first deadly confrontation along India and China's disputed border in more than 40 years.

Tensions escalated in the aftermath. India banned multiple Chinese apps, heightened scrutiny of Chinese investments and direct air routes between the two neighbors were canceled. Both countries had shut their borders to foreign tourists due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but visa restrictions continued even as global travel began to resume.

China lifted tourist visa restrictions for Indian nationals in March after Beijing and New Delhi announced they would work to resume direct air travel, according to Reuters. Now India's reciprocal move is seen as a welcome move by many. "Inbound tourism is going through tough period post Covid, so it is good for us that another market has opened," according to Sarvjeet Sankrit, founder of the Delhi-based travel agency Ghum India Ghum (Roam India Roam), who said he saw "lots of Chinese tourists" visit the capital before the visa ban.

India lifting restrictions is "a good thing for vehicle owners, guides, and hotel owners," he said. "Everyone will get more business." Chinese national Kate Hu, whose boyfriend is from India, said she is excited at the prospect of finally being able to visit his family.

The Hong Kong-based comedian had already booked tickets to visit India for his sister's wedding in April when she found out she couldn't get the visa. "I lost a bit of money there," Hu said. "We had talked about getting married just to have the visa, so now I'm happy to hear I won't have to get married just for a visa," she joked.



Her boyfriend is currently in India to take care of his sick mother. “If this (news) had come out sooner, then I could have gone with him,” she said. Pradeep K, a consultant in Delhi called India’s latest move is “a good thing,” adding “people of India and China will get to interact more.” He said he is excited at the prospect of traveling to China to see pandas. “Will a diplomatic move on paper change mindsets and bring people closer? Your guess is as good as mine.”

### **Flights and pilgrimages resume**

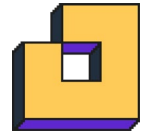
India’s decision to remove visa restrictions is the latest in a string of steps taken by New Delhi and Beijing to reset ties after Chinese leader Xi Jinping met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Russia last October. In January, India and China agreed to resume direct commercial flights and Beijing recently agreed to reopen Mount Kailash and Lash Manasarovar in western Tibet to Indian pilgrims for the first time in five years.

Earlier this month, India’s foreign minister S. Jaishankar met with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Beijing, where the two “took note of the recent progress made by the two sides to stabilize and rebuild ties, with priority on people-centric engagements,” according to a statement from the Indian foreign ministry. There has been a “gradual normalization of the India-China relationship,” said Harsh V. Pant, foreign policy head at the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation think tank.

“There is a certain recalibration happening from both ends. But this is also a reflection that India faces a unique challenge in managing China,” he added. Despite the ongoing tensions, India is still economically dependent on China and sees “a possibility of building an economic partnership” while making its red lines clear, Pant said. Delhi-based teacher Saurabhi Singh said while India and China have fought wars in the past, “relations can and should change.”

She added: “We have labor, markets, manufacturing abilities and a fondness for food, tea, electronics that connect people of both countries.”

Source: [Indian and Chinese travelers hail end of visa freeze between world’s two most populous nations as diplomatic tensions thaw](#)



## **Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!**

1. Populous :
2. Clamoring :
3. Fractious :
4. Thaw :
5. Significant :
6. Consultation ;
7. Facilitation :
8. Normalization :
9. Strained :
10. De facto :
11. Friction :
12. Confrontation :
13. Scrutiny :
14. Reciprocal :
15. Inbound :
16. Prospect :
17. Pilgrimages :
18. Sidelines :
19. People-centric :
20. Recalibration :



## **China's Xi urges Europe to make 'the right strategic choice' amid global trade turbulence at key summit**

Chinese leader Xi Jinping urged the European Union to make “the right strategic choice” and enhance cooperation with China, while EU leaders called for a rebalancing of trade ties, as the two sides tackle deep-seated grievances at a tense summit in Beijing. European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen met with Xi on Thursday morning and Chinese Premier Li Qiang in the afternoon, China's state broadcaster CCTV reported.

The European leaders used the meetings to voice their concerns over a host of thorny issues, from the gaping trade imbalance between the two economies to China's ongoing support for Russia in the Ukraine war, and – more recently – Beijing's chokehold on the rare earths supply chain. Von der Leyen told Xi that the EU's economic ties with China – running at a trade deficit of 300 billion euros (\$350 billion) last year – had reached “an inflection point.”

“As our cooperation has deepened, so have imbalances,” she said. “Rebalancing our bilateral relation is essential... It is vital for China and Europe to acknowledge our respective concerns and come forward with real solutions.” Costa, meanwhile, urged Xi to use China's influence to bring an end to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The summit, which has been whittled from a planned two days to a single-day event, is ostensibly meant to celebrate 50 years of diplomatic ties between Beijing and the EU. But it is instead exposing a widening rift between the two sides – even though both had signaled hopes for a reset in relations just months earlier, as they faced down US President Donald Trump's global tariff war.

On Thursday, Xi told Costa and von der Leyen at the Great Hall of the People that the challenges currently faced by Europe “do not come from China” and urged the EU to “properly handle differences and frictions.” He called on the bloc to keep its markets open to imports and investment while exercising “restraint” in using restrictive trade and other economic measures, according to a readout from China's foreign ministry.

“In the face of accelerating changes not seen in a century and a turbulent international landscape, China and EU leaders must... make the right strategic choices that meet the expectations of the people and stand the test of history,” Xi said, according to CCTV. Without directly mentioning Trump's trade war, Xi emphasized that both China and the EU are “constructive forces that support multilateralism and advocate for openness and cooperation.”

“The more severe and complex the international situation becomes, the more China and the EU need to strengthen communication, enhance mutual trust and deepen cooperation,” Xi was quoted as saying. But for the EU, a long list of grievances is standing in the way of closer ties. The bloc raised its concerns at the summit about Beijing's “ongoing systemic distortions and growing manufacturing overcapacity,” which it said resulted in an even more uneven playing field, according to an EU press release.



The European leaders also urged China to take concrete action to address European businesses' access to the Chinese market, put an end to "unjustified and retaliatory" trade measures on EU exports and lift export controls on rare earths and permanent magnets. In a veiled threat, the EU officials vowed to take "proportionate, legally compliant action" to protect the bloc's interests if negotiated solutions cannot be reached.

The EU also repeated its calls on Beijing not to provide any material support for Russia's military-industrial base and expressed concerns over China's policies in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong, as well as rising tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the East and South China Seas. But in a rare point of agreement, the two sides issued a joint statement on climate, pledging to "demonstrate leadership together" and to draw up ambitious plans to reduce planet-heating pollution before the COP30 climate conference, scheduled for November.

The pledge stands in stark contrast to the climate policy of the Trump administration, which has withdrawn the US from the Paris Agreement and fired the State Department's career staff overseeing climate negotiations.

### **Widening rift**

The EU was far from shy about its grievances in the lead-up to the summit. Officials in recent weeks have reiterated concerns over what they say are inexpensive Chinese goods "flooding" European markets, Beijing's recent move to squeeze the rare earths supply chain, and its ongoing backing for Russia as it wages war in Ukraine. Beijing has lashed out against those concerns, including the 27-member bloc's move last year to raise tariffs on its electric vehicles, launching a range of its own trade probes in apparent retaliation.

After the EU last month announced it was barring Chinese companies from participating in public tenders for medical devices over a certain value, Beijing hit back with its own curbs on government purchases of Europe-made devices. China's Ministry of Commerce has also slammed the EU decision to include two Chinese banks and a handful of other firms in its latest sanctions against Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. It claimed the move would have a "severely negative impact on China-EU economic and trade relations."

On Tuesday, Commerce Minister Wang Wentao lodged solemn representations — diplomatic speak for formally expressing serious discontent — over the sanctions in a video call with EU trade chief Maros Sefcovic. Trump's trade war — and his negotiations with both major economies — is also casting a long shadow over the summit.

There were signs earlier this year that Beijing hoped shared adversity in the face of tariff threats from the US could push China and Europe together. But in separate addresses to G7 leaders and European lawmakers in recent weeks, von der Leyen made clear the bloc's deep concerns about Beijing were unresolved.

"China is using this quasi-monopoly (on rare earths) not only as a bargaining chip, but also weaponizing it to undermine competitors in key industries," she told G7 leaders meeting in Canada in June.





Beijing has extensive control over supply chains for these critical minerals key in everything from EV batteries and cell phones to fighter jets. It roiled the global manufacturing industry after placing export controls on some such minerals in April amid its trade spat with the US. China agreed during a truce with the US in June to ease these controls.

Von der Leyen also called for unified G7 action to pressure Beijing as it “floods global markets with subsidized overcapacity that its own market cannot absorb.”

Source: [China's Xi urges Europe to make 'the right strategic choice' amid global trade turbulence at key summit](#)



## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Strategic :
2. Rebalancing :
3. Grievances :
4. Thorny :
5. Inflection :
6. Ostensibly :
7. Rift :
8. Frictions :
9. Turbulent :
10. Multilateralism:
11. Distortions :
12. Overcapacity :
13. Retaliatory :
14. Proportionate :
15. Pledging :
16. Reiterated :
17. Retaliation :
18. Solemn :
19. Adversity :
20. Monopoly :



## **France recognizing a Palestinian state is a bold move by Macron, with a hint of desperation**

With a single post, French President Emmanuel Macron changed everything, and nothing at all. His late-evening announcement on X that France will recognize a Palestinian state in September, the first Western member of the United Nations Security Council and first G7 nation to do so, took many by surprise. Although France's recognition has been expected for several months now – indeed the brief Israel-Iran war forced a postponement of the summit on Israel-Palestine with Saudi Arabia and European allies that Paris had been shepherding – it was not expected to land like this.

### **Two takeaways**

The surprise announcement tells us two things. Firstly, that Macron feels this is the time to act. Leaders from France, the UK and Germany are due to speak Friday to seek urgent action over the new lows of the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. More than 1,000 Gazans have been killed desperately seeking food since May, dozens more from starvation itself.

Images of skeletal, starving Gazans, including children, have harked back to the darkest corners of the 20th century, stirring Western revulsion – if not yet concrete action – toward the humanitarian crisis. Macron's decision is a bold one – following a smattering of European allies: Ireland, Norway and Spain, along with around 140 other member states of the United Nations – but leading the way for other major international powers to follow suit.

"I've had other colleagues on the phone and I'm sure that we won't be the only ones recognizing Palestine in September," a senior official in the French presidency told CNN Thursday following Macron's announcement. Eyes will now likely turn to the UK, perhaps Germany too. The prospect of the United States, Israel's closest ally even without a Trump presidency, seems impossible. But for those on the ground, the French decision will likely change little.

The move was welcomed by Hamas as a "positive step." For Israeli leaders, it didn't go down well at all. Recognition "rewards terror" said Israeli Prime Minister (and long-time opponent of a Palestinian state) Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday night, with other ministers arguing the move now justifies the official annexation of the West Bank – Judea and Samaria in the parlance of the Israeli far-right.

The sentiment was quickly echoed by the United States, which has found itself increasingly at odds from its western allies in Europe over Israel's war in Gaza. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the US "strongly rejects" Macron's plan. "This reckless decision only serves Hamas propaganda and sets back peace," he wrote on X Thursday. "It is a slap in the face to the victims of October 7th."

Even if international recognition could magically mete out concrete change for Gaza, the September deadline will come far too late for Palestinians starving to death under the Israeli-controlled blockade of food. Philippe Lazzarini, the head of UNRWA, the main United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees, said Thursday that people in Gaza resembled "walking corpses" as starvation took hold.



All 2.1 million people in Gaza are now food insecure and on Tuesday, Gaza's health ministry said 900,000 children are going hungry. Some 70,000 children already show signs of malnutrition, they said.

### **A diplomatic long shot?**

France's solo announcement also suggests a hint of desperation on Macron's part. He's a man who likes a coalition on the world stage – strength in numbers is usually a winning strategy. A month ago, the stage appeared set for France to recognize Palestine – a summit co-hosted with Saudi Arabia was planned in Riyadh from June 17 to 20. But when open conflict broke out between Israel and Iran on June 13, that plan was torn apart.

The expectation among experts was that France and Saudi Arabia would marshal other allies into a joint recognition – a strong signal to Jerusalem and Washington D.C. on the importance of the two-state solution and peace. Macron may still have his win in September if allies join France's recognition but it won't have been without risking France's diplomatic capital and cajoling more reluctant partners.

"The idea is to put a bit of pressure on other countries," the senior French official told CNN. And Macron's decision holds weight. European nations have proved stubbornly reluctant to formally act upon a two-state solution and recognize Palestinian statehood. Respect for the West's ally Israel, distaste for the Islamist government in Gaza and the shortcomings of the West Bank's Palestinian Authority, and an apparently acceptable decades-long status quo saw muted outrage at Israeli settlements and attacks on Palestinians, with little shift in international action. France is now breaking that glass ceiling.

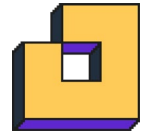
Within France, a country that has long held a sympathetic position toward the Palestinian cause, recognizing Palestinian statehood won't be a controversial move. Post-WWII leader Charles de Gaulle famously rallied France to the Palestinian people following the 1967 war, with Paris engaging with the Palestinian Liberation Organization for decades, even as terror attacks were committed in the group's name on French soil.

In 2014, the French parliament called on the government to recognize Palestine, an appeal that the government backed at the United Nations Security Council in an unsuccessful vote to bring about Palestinian statehood by 2017. France has long backed a two-state solution for Israel and Palestine based on the 1967 borders, although the Elysee source said that the French recognition would not specify the borders.

Macron staunchly backed Israel's retaliation for the October 7 massacres but over time has hardened his criticism of Netanyahu and Israel's conduct of the war. Publicly, he worried about "importing" the conflict into France, home to Europe's largest community of Jews and Muslims. But as casualties in Gaza mounted, France banned arms exports to Israel, orchestrated aid drops into the territory and repeatedly called for a ceasefire and access of humanitarian aid and journalists.

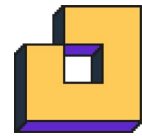
In taking this leap of faith, recognizing a Palestinian state ahead of France's peers, the Elysee Palace is surely hoping for a domino effect of recognition across the West. With aid still cruelly beyond the reach of ordinary Gazans, perhaps it's a last ditch effort to bring some relief.

Source: [France recognizing a Palestinian state is a bold move by Macron, with a hint of desperation](#)



## **Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!**

1. Recognize :
2. Postponement :
3. Shepherding :
4. Skeletal :
5. Revulsion :
6. Smattering :
7. Annexation :
8. Parlance :
9. Reckless :
10. Propaganda :
11. Blockade :
12. Coalition :
13. Marshal :
14. Cajoling :
15. Reluctant :
16. Stubbornly :
17. Statehood :
18. Staunchly :
19. Orchestrated :
20. Allows :



## **India is now the most populous country in the world. And it's ready to become a tourism force**

Having recently become the world's most populous nation, India has sparked much speculation about whether it will continue to surpass China in other arenas. All eyes now are on the South Asian superpower's growing influence on the global stage. And the tourism industry is no exception. By 2024, Indians are expected to spend more than \$42 billion per year on outbound travel, according to recent reports.

India is experiencing what Omri Morgenshtern, CEO of travel and bookings website Agoda, calls a tourism "boom," and is currently "the biggest growing outbound destination." While the total number of travelers coming from some other countries is higher, no nation's tourism sector is growing as fast as India's, he adds. It isn't just about the number of people traveling, either. The country is continuing to pour billions of dollars into growing its aviation industry and cementing its status as a travel hub.

### **A series of bold investments**

Experts say much of India's outbound growth trajectory is being driven by improvements in infrastructure and an expansion in its aviation sector. The Indian government announced this year it plans to spend 980 billion rupees (\$11.9 billion) by 2025 on constructing and modernizing airports within the country, Reuters reported.

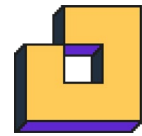
Among these is the Noida International Airport, in the city of Jewar in Uttar Pradesh state. Currently due to open in 2024, according to the Times of India, it's poised to be Asia's largest airport and will enhance connectivity to and from the wider Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR) and Western Uttar Pradesh.

Gary Bowerman, founder of Check-in Asia, a tourism-focused research and marketing company, says "the work that (India's) been doing within the country is now starting to bear fruit. It's got more airports, it's got more terminals, it's got more infrastructure than it had a decade ago."

Since 2017, at least 73 airports have been operationalized under India's regional connectivity scheme. Meanwhile, Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport cracked the top 10 list of the world's busiest international airports for the first time ever this year, with 59.5 million passengers passing through its gates in 2022. (It should be noted China was still largely closed off to the world due to the pandemic until early 2023.)

Morgenshtern says the rise in outbound tourism from India is the result of investment not just by the government but by private airlines as well. "I think there's a combination there of the government investing in the airports, and the airlines themselves taking very, very bold moves of growing the capacity," he tells CNN. Some airlines are feeling the consequences of those bold moves, such as India's Go First, a low-budget airline that declared bankruptcy in May.

Bowerman believes that low-cost carriers like Go First have been "vital for growth" in India's "very price-sensitive market."



“But the margins have been very low and competition fierce, and this has resulted in some high-profile low-cost or economy carriers failing, which shakes consumer confidence and impacts the overall market balance,” he adds.

Despite the struggles, other airlines are continuing to offer lower-cost options. Air India, for example, is fully owned by Indian conglomerate Tata Sons. As part of its efforts to expand its offerings, the company announced earlier this year it will be operating flights under both the Air India brand and Air India Express, having previously merged the latter with Tata’s other low-cost airline, AirAsia India.

Bowerman says this single-brand, low-cost carrier indicates that Air India “clearly sees the LCC (low-cost carrier) segment as an integral part of its own growth strategy and of the continued expansion of India’s aviation market.” With the mergers and consolidation of airlines under the Tata umbrella, Air India is now the country’s second-largest domestic airline and its biggest international carrier, according to a release from Tata.

The airline has made other moves to facilitate increased Indian travel. In February, Air India purchased nearly 500 new planes, the most ever bought in one order by a single airline. Over the past two years, the airline has also increased frequencies on existing routes and added several new ones to key destinations in Europe and the US.

Air India isn’t the only airline stepping up its game. In early June, low-cost carrier Indigo announced the addition of 174 new weekly flights and six new destinations across Africa and Asia. To meet increasing air travel demand, India has also expanded its airplane leasing program for both domestic and international routes, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia told the CAPA India Aviation Summit in March.

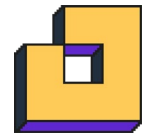
To draw more Indian travelers, Morgenshtern suggests countries now need to ease visa restrictions and increase the number of flights from India. “When those two things happen,” he says, “then the magic happens on a growing market like India.”

### **Who stands to benefit**

Based on data collected by Agoda, Indians are now traveling to a more diverse range of countries. “If you look at a place like Europe, you see more of them going to France or Switzerland,” says Morgenshtern. “Those are two countries that weren’t in the top 10 destinations for Indians before the pandemic.” In 2019, the three most popular destinations for Indians were Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia.

When it comes to Southeast Asia, the top countries frequented by Indians now are roughly the same as they were five years ago, but the number of travelers has increased. “We see a lot more Indians traveling to Vietnam, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia. They all got Indian travelers before but not to the extent that we see them here,” Morgenshtern said.

Indian travel to Vietnam, for example, is expected to increase by at least 1,000% from pre-pandemic levels, according to Morgenshtern. Southeast Asia in general is clearly a top destination for Indian travelers. “Countries like Singapore, Thailand, Indonesia, they’re all out benchmarking the crazy growth that we see anywhere happening with Indians,” Morgenshtern says.



In contrast, based on Agoda's data, not as many Indians are traveling to Japan, Korea or Taiwan, which the CEO suggests is in part because of their distance from India – but could also reflect a lack of awareness. "When we talk with tourism authorities, they recognize India as a growing power and they all have something in their plans," Morgenshtern says. But when it comes to promoting the destinations to Indian customers, they are "just starting now."

### **India vs. China**

While China's outbound travel market has skyrocketed over the last two decades, India's boom has come a bit later, which Bowerman says is due in part to how different their aviation sectors are. In India, the aviation industry today predominantly consists of private airlines, which often compete with each other.

On the other hand, China has three main airline groups developed and consolidated by the government, each of which operates in specific regions: Air China is based in Beijing, China Eastern is based in Shanghai and China Southern is based in Guangzhou. As a result, Bowerman says, "the Chinese state government was really able to control the volume and the frequency of routes, particularly into Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia, because it had these three groups that don't compete with each other."

According to Bowerman, it's harder for destinations to develop more flights in India because they have to deal with multiple airlines. "This," Bowerman says, "is a key factor that slowed down the growth of India over the past decade" when it comes to outbound travel.

Before the pandemic, China was the largest source market for tourists in Southeast Asia. In 2019, Southeast Asian countries received 32.3 million visitors from China, but just 5.3 million from India.

"There's a lot of catchup to do," Bowerman says. But there's still good news for India.

"There is a move now amongst tourism boards in Southeast Asia to diversify their market mix so they're not simply reliant on China," he adds.

However, if India does hope to overtake China when it comes to outbound tourism, Bowerman believes it may take "possibly two decades."

"You can't catch up that gap in a short period of time," he says.

Source: [India is now the most populous country in the world. And it's ready to become a tourism force](#)





## **Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!**

1. Populous :
2. Speculation :
3. Outbound :
4. Cementing :
5. Trajectory :
6. Infrastructure :
7. Modernizing :
8. Connectivity :
9. Operationalized:
10. Bankruptcy :
11. Price-sensitive :
12. Conglomerate :
13. Consolidation :
14. Frequencies :
15. Leasing :
16. Diverse :
17. Benchmarking :
18. Predominantly:
19. Diversify :
20. Reliant :



## **Gaza is starving and outrage is spreading. Will Netanyahu listen?**

The images of skeletal children that are now pouring out of Gaza are shocking but they should not be surprising. Humanitarian groups with decades of experience distributing aid in the Strip have been warning about this scenario for months, since Israel began throttling aid to a trickle. Haunting footage of lifeless bodies with sharp bones protruding through stretched skin can be seen around the world. The pictures of starvation in Gaza are horrific, distressing and inescapable.

The main United Nations agency for Palestinians said Thursday that “people are being starved, while a few kilometers away supermarkets are loaded with food,” highlighting the stark and uncomfortable reality between life in Israel and survival in Gaza.

On a popular US-Canadian podcast this week, listeners learned that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu prefers Burger King to McDonalds, a ‘Whopper’ seeming to be his burger of choice. While Netanyahu did not introduce the topic, the public discussion on fast food by the man responsible for getting food into Gaza is, at its most generous, tone deaf.

The US correspondent for Israeli newspaper Haaretz noted that Netanyahu “spent valuable time” on the burger chat “rather than answering legitimate questions about the Gaza humanitarian crisis or the delays in sealing a hostage deal and cease-fire.” World leaders see the same pictures of starvation as everyone else and yet seem powerless to stop them, unable to pressure Israel into allowing more aid in or returning to the tried and tested UN-led distribution methods.

It is true that condemnation is becoming more collective and targeted. More than two dozen European foreign ministers jointly criticized Israel’s “drip feeding of aid and the inhumane killing of civilians,” a statement Israel’s foreign ministry rejected as “disconnected from reality.”

Then on Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that his country will recognize a Palestinian state in September, the first member of the United Nations Security Council and the G7 nations to do so, prompting outrage from Israeli leaders, and condemnation from the US. More than 100 international humanitarian organizations warned Israeli restrictions on aid are endangering the lives of doctors and aid workers. But these are words and words can be ignored.

Writing about the EU response, former Israeli hostage negotiator Gershon Baskin said it was “still just a piece of paper. Into the trash bin of history is the way that the State of Israel treats it.” So, what could reverse what the United Nations chief is calling the “horror show” in Gaza? In a word, Trump.

The US president was publicly scathing of Netanyahu when Israel struck Iran hard in the final hours before a ceasefire. After a phone call, Israel pulled back. When Israel struck the only Catholic Church in Gaza, Trump did not have a “positive reaction” according to the White House and called Netanyahu. The Israeli leader said he deeply regretted it, calling the strike a mistake.



An irate phone call from the leader of the free world does appear to be the quickest way to provoke a change of heart from a leader seemingly unmoved by increasing international criticism. The White House spokesperson has said Trump “wants the killing to end” but visible anger, frustration, condemnation from the US president over the humanitarian crisis unfolding has been minimal, at least publicly.

The US focus has been on securing a ceasefire and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas, still elusive despite words of hope and optimism from the Trump administration in recent weeks. That plan appeared to be in limbo after the US and Israel pulled its negotiators from talks in Qatar on Thursday.

Arab leaders have condemned Israel, called for an immediate ceasefire and devised a plan to rebuild post-war Gaza to counter Trump’s plan to displace the entire population from the Strip. The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council called Israel’s policies this week the “crime of the century.”

Israel has long rejected accusations of a humanitarian blockade, insisting its policies are designed to prevent Hamas from stealing supplies, claims aid agencies have denied. Israel’s President Isaac Herzog, visiting Gaza Wednesday, says Israel is following international law and it is Hamas who is trying to sabotage the aid process. COGAT, the agency in charge of aid entering Gaza, says the the military is “working to allow and facilitate the transfer of aid, including food.”

Israel has also pushed back on calls to allow more aid in, saying there are truckloads waiting at the border to be collected by aid agencies. The UN and others on the ground have countered that Israel does not always give permission to move aid or approves routes deemed too dangerous. Comments from the far right of Netanyahu’s coalition calling for starving Gaza until the hostages are released provoke widespread revulsion outside Israel, but less within it.

Hamas’ brutal attack on October 7, 2023 killed around 1,200 Israelis, saw another roughly 250 kidnapped as hostages, and hardened Israeli views against their Palestinian neighbors. But one recent poll shows 71% of Israelis asked now want the war to end.

While Netanyahu is losing his mandate to keep fighting, there are no signs that his coalition plans to ease restrictions on aid to Gaza, where nearly 60,000 people have been killed since the start of the war. And the media in Israel focuses more on concern for the remaining hostages and the soldiers fighting in Gaza, than it does on the plight of besieged Palestinians. For them, hope now rests on a ceasefire, a deal that will allow a flood of supplies into the ruined territory. But when will that be agreed, how soon will the borders open to life-saving aid and how many will die in the meantime?

The malnutrition toll has been spiking in recent days with the director of al-Shifa Hospital warning this week “we are heading towards terrifying death tolls.” One UN worker on the ground added, “People in Gaza are neither dead (nor) alive, they are walking corpses”.

Source: [Gaza is starving and outrage is spreading. Will Netanyahu listen?](#)



## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Skeletal :
2. Humanitarian :
3. Throttling :
4. Protruding :
5. Inescapable :
6. Legitimate :
7. Condemnation :
8. Collective :
9. Scathing :
10. Irate :
11. Outrage :
12. Elusive :
13. Limbo :
14. Devised :
15. Sabotage :
16. Prompt :
17. Revulsion :
18. Mandate :
19. Besieged :
20. Spiking :



## **Former Nazi bunker turned into hotel and leisure complex in Germany**

At 58 meters tall - just a little taller than the Leaning Tower of Pisa, but with considerably more heft - the St. Pauli bunker in Hamburg, Germany, has dominated the city skyline for just over 80 years. Built using forced labor during Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime, it's a relic of the darkest period in Germany's history - but this concrete hulk has had a surprising rebirth.

The relaunched Hamburg Bunker is now packed with two restaurants, a five-story Hard Rock Hotel and a newly built pyramid-like rooftop bar and garden from which greenery flows abundantly over the concrete facade. The REVERB by Hard Rock is a fitting addition to a city with an impressive musical history – this is, after all, where The Beatles began their career at the start of the 1960s. The Karviertel neighborhood in which the fortress-like bunker sits is a cool enclave filled with stylish coffee shops and vintage stores, plus the Knust nightclub in a repurposed abattoir.

### **The amenities**

Rooms in the 134-key REVERB range from 180 euros for a classic room, with amenities including a 55-inch flat screen TV and Alexa in-room assistant, to 269 euros for a suite with sweeping citywide views. The hotel also has the kind of modern details you'd expect in any self-respecting hip hotel, such as self check-in, smart technology and co-working spaces.

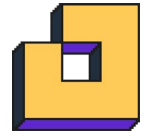
You don't have to be a hotel guest to enjoy the bunker's amenities, however. On the ground level, there's the Constant Grind coffee shop and bar, and a Rock Shop for those seeking Hard Rock merch. Bar-restaurant Karo & Paul, by German TV chef Frank Rosin, opened as a bar in April 2024 and occupies the first three levels of the building. The restaurant area is still coming soon.

The restaurant La Sala – Spanish for living room - is open for business on the fifth floor, offering lofty views and an international menu. Finally at the top is the Green Beanie roof garden, with bar and walkway looping round the building, which can be accessed by the public for free.

### **The challenge**

The Hamburg bunker was one of eight flak towers – above-ground anti-aircraft bunkers which doubled as air raid shelters - which Germany built after British air raids on Berlin in 1940. The history the Hamburg Bunker wears is heavy, but a 76,000-tonne concrete behemoth with walls 2.5 meters thick can't be easily demolished or ignored.

The only flak tower to have been completely destroyed is one at Berlin's zoo, as the others are in heavily populated areas where the explosives involved would be too great a risk, AFP reports. "The idea of raising the height of the building with greenery was to add something peaceful and positive to this massive block left over from the Nazi dictatorship," Anita Engels, from the Hildegarden neighborhood association which supported the project, told AFP.



The association has helped with this new chapter in the Hamburg flak tower's history by collecting testimonies from people who lived in the wartime bunker as well as records of the hundreds of forced laborers who built it. An exhibition on the first floor now tells the full story of the building's history.

Source: [Former Nazi bunker turned into hotel and leisure complex in Germany](#)



## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Considerably :
2. Heft :
3. Relic :
4. Rebirth :
5. Abundantly :
6. Façade :
7. Enclave :
8. Repurposed :
9. Abattoir :
10. Amenities :
11. Sweeping :
12. Lofty :
13. Flak :
14. Aircraft :
15. Behemoth :
16. Demolished :
17. Explosives :
18. Dictatorship :
19. Testimonies :
20. Exhibition :



## **What life is like in one of the most remote places on Earth**

Deep within the Arctic Circle, pocketed between giant glaciers and beneath polar ice floes, Swedish photographer and content creator Cecilia Blomdahl found extraordinary warmth. The Norwegian archipelago of Svalbard, lying roughly midway between Norway's northern coast and the North Pole, is the site of the world's northernmost permanent settlements. Blomdahl, who lives in Svalbard's largest city of Longyearbyen, is one of about 2,500 residents in the region. Here, colorful cabins contrast colossal ice cap backdrops and vibrant celestial phenomena light the sky.

Blomdahl moved to Svalbard in 2015 and documents her unique life to millions of fascinated social media followers. She has now captured her home's serenity, sparkling in shades of blue, in a new photobook titled "Life on Svalbard." "When you live here, you really get immersed in it; the quiet and peaceful nature," Blomdahl, a former hospitality worker turned content creator, told CNN, "And every day being so close to the nature; it's infatuating."

### **The challenges of a beautiful life**

For all its natural beauty, Svalbard is much more than a pretty place. Its rich resources, such as fish, gas, and mineral deposits, have made it a topic of economic and diplomatic dispute in the past, and it now serves as a flourishing global hub for economic activities and scientific research. For those just coming for a spell, it's a bucket list tourist destination.

But as Blomdahl knows, life in Svalbard isn't easy. From temperatures sometimes plummeting to below minus 30 (-34.4 Celsius), to polar bears and arctic foxes occasionally roaming local streets, it takes a unique individual to forgo life on the mainland and move to such a remote, and at times forbidding, place.

"Every day feels adventurous. It's going to be crazy or wild or just a regular day," said Blomdahl, "But a regular day here is so different; it's drinking coffee with Northern Lights, or midnight sun, or reindeers." Those are common sentiments within Svalbard's community — the extreme conditions, while enchanting, means people don't stick around the area by accident. People from around 50 countries reside there, working in areas such as scientific research and seasonal tourism.

What moves someone to search for a home in such a remote corner of the world? According to behavioral science experts, many people who seek out extreme conditions may be motivated by desires to challenge the limits of their physical and psychological abilities, escape personal problems or everyday tedium, or simply for the thrill.

For Blomdahl, a glimpse of Svalbard's unparalleled scenery was all she needed to forsake her corporate ambitions in England and Sweden and opt to live what she describes in her book as a "nature-connected life marked by a slower pace." "Everything up here is so pure and so beautiful," Blomdahl said, "you think that it's some sort of magic because it's so unreal." Living on the edge of the world

On her social media channels, Blomdahl shows viewers firsthand how Svalbard's environment shapes her everyday life. For example, not only is it necessary to carry polar bear protection gear when traveling outside designated settlements, it's legally mandated. In one





striking image in her book, she is shown sporting a firearm on her back as she and her dog stand far from the settlements. Blomdahl, who photographed all of the images herself, even caught one of a polar bear near her home — taken from a noticeable distance away, for safety reasons.

A year in Svalbard is marked by two unusual periods of light: polar night and midnight sun. Polar night runs from mid-November to the end of January, when the sun doesn't rise above the horizon. Midnight sun, which lasts about 18 weeks between April and August, is when the sun doesn't set below the horizon. These periods of constant light and day-long dark can take a toll on the body and mind. Blomdahl recalled how friends, disoriented by polar night, found themselves heading to work in the middle of the night, instead of the equally dark daytime hours.

Such abnormal living conditions can have pervasive effects on people's health. Despite an overall positive outlook on health and quality of life in Svalbard, polar night and midnight sun can disrupt sleep-wake cycles, blood protein levels, and lead to increased risks of chronic disease. Despite taking supplements, Blomdahl says she noticed a drop in her vitamin D levels, which support immune health and brain cell activity.

Nonetheless, Blomdahl still says polar night is "one of the best times of year," where she can "become one with the darkness." She enjoys the tranquility during that period, but emphasizes the importance of maintaining a positive outlook and staying active during what otherwise could be a lethargic season. "Your mindset is so powerful. I see these dark days as something cozy," Blomdahl said, "I think it's very much up to each and every person to try to create that routine and that mindset."

### **A balanced outlook**

Maintaining an adaptive mindset is also an important way Svalbardians process the unique threat climate change poses to the region. Longyearbyen is warming six times faster than the global average, studies suggest, and thawing permafrost and rising sea levels threaten the local economy and infrastructure. Studies within other Arctic communities show a correlation between climate change and higher levels of mental stress. In Svalbard, people report a high level of satisfaction with their lives despite environmental challenges, but the complications of climate issues like permafrost thaw can leave some feeling disempowered. Blomdahl notes that an annual environmental survey is conducted in Svalbard to manage risks.

As for day-to-day life, Svalbard is sufficiently equipped with the means to sustain its population. Longyearbyen features most of what most cities on the mainland offer, including an airport, a hospital, educational institutions, and more — all crowned the world's northmost of their institutions. However, given the mission-based work characterizing much of Svalbard's economy, not to mention the harsh environment, the average stay in Svalbard is only seven years, according to Statistics Norway.

Yet this conveniently aligns with a desire not to expand life on Svalbard, according to Blomdahl. Local officials have geared available resources to primarily maintain life on Svalbard as it is, given the environmental and developmental constraints.



As for Blomdahl, her positive mindset and love for Svalbard steers her away from dwelling on uncertainty or concern. Instead, she says she's solely focused on creating educational and peaceful content about her distinctive life in a distinctive place.

"That's just what I want to do," said Blomdahl, "I want to continue to show the beauty of the Arctic. I just want to show Svalbard the way it is."

Source: [What life is like in one of the most remote places on Earth](#)



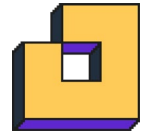
## Fill The Words With Appropriate Meaning!

1. Archipelago :
2. Northernmost :
3. Colossal :
4. Celestial :
5. Serenity :
6. Infatuating :
7. Flourishing :
8. Plummeting :
9. Forbidding :
10. Enchanting :
11. Tedium :
12. Forsake :
13. Mandated :
14. Disoriented :
15. Pervasive :
16. Tranquility :
17. Lethargic :
18. Adaptive :
19. Permafrost ;
20. Distinctive :



## **Answer Questions Below After Reading The Texts**

1. According to the article, the Thai-Cambodian conflict pits Thailand, a longtime ally of the United States, against Cambodia, which has close ties with which other major world power?
  - A. Russia
  - B. Vietnam
  - C. India
  - D. China
  - E. Japan
2. What event immediately preceded the escalation of violence on Thursday, where Thailand deployed fighter jets against Cambodian military targets?
  - A. A Thai soldier was captured by Cambodian forces.
  - B. A phone call involving Thailand's Prime Minister was leaked to the public.
  - C. A second Thai soldier in a week was severely injured by a landmine explosion.
  - D. Cambodia recalled its diplomatic staff from Thailand.
  - E. The United Nations called for an immediate ceasefire.
3. The mass recall vote currently happening in Taiwan is an attempt to unseat 24 lawmakers from which main opposition party?
  - A. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)
  - B. The Taiwan People's Party (TPP)
  - C. The Kuomintang (KMT)
  - D. The Communist Party of Taiwan
  - E. The New Power Party
4. The five-year visa freeze between India and China, which has now ended, was a result of what major event?
  - A. The beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.
  - B. A trade dispute over technology and manufacturing.
  - C. A deadly border clash in the Galwan Valley in 2020.
  - D. The cancellation of all direct flights between the two countries.
  - E. A disagreement during the BRICS summit.
5. During the tense summit in Beijing, what was one of the key concerns European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen voiced to Chinese leader Xi Jinping?
  - A. China's growing military presence in the Arctic.
  - B. The gaping trade imbalance between their economies.
  - C. A disagreement over the location for the next summit.
  - D. China's application to join the European Union.
  - E. The high cost of visas for European tourists.



6. President Emmanuel Macron's announcement that France will recognize a Palestinian state is a historic first for which group of nations?
  - A. The G7
  - B. The permanent members of the UN Security Council
  - C. The European Union
  - D. The NATO alliance
  - E. The G20
7. As part of its major investment in aviation infrastructure, which new airport in India is poised to be Asia's largest when it opens?
  - A. Indira Gandhi International Airport
  - B. Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport
  - C. Kempegowda International Airport
  - D. Noida International Airport
  - E. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose International Airport
8. In a moment described in the article as "tone deaf," what fast-food preference of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was discussed on a podcast amid the Gaza humanitarian crisis?
  - A. KFC over Popeyes
  - B. Pizza Hut over Domino's
  - C. Burger King over McDonald's
  - D. Starbucks over Dunkin'
  - E. Taco Bell over Chipotle
9. The former St. Pauli Nazi bunker in Hamburg, Germany, has been repurposed into a hotel and leisure complex featuring which international hotel brand?
  - A. The Ritz-Carlton
  - B. The Four Seasons
  - C. Marriott
  - D. The Hilton
  - E. Hard Rock Hotel
10. What are the two unusual periods of light and darkness that mark a year in the remote Arctic archipelago of Svalbard?
  - A. The blue hour and the golden hour
  - B. The summer solstice and the winter solstice
  - C. The aurora borealis and the aurora australis
  - D. Polar night and midnight sun
  - E. A total solar eclipse and a total lunar eclipse