

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

Friedrich Merz reaffirmed **Germany's** support for **Israel** during a visit to Jerusalem. The German chancellor also met Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister. Earlier this year Mr Merz criticised Israel's offensive in Gaza and stopped exports of some weapons, breaking with [Germany's post-war policy of support for the country](#). Mr Merz, who recently restarted arms sales, is keen to mend ties.

Donald Trump's special envoy, **Steve Witkoff**, and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, completed three days of talks with Ukrainian officials in Miami on a framework for a deal to end the war between [Russia and Ukraine](#). Ukraine's president, **Volodymyr Zelensky**, said he had had a "constructive" call with the American pair. Meanwhile Russia continued its attacks, striking the eastern city of Kremenchuk on Saturday night.

**Chinese** fighter jets locked their targeting radars onto **Japanese** warplanes near Okinawa, a Japanese island. Koizumi Shinjiro, Japan's defence minister, called it "a dangerous act". China's navy accused Japan of "slandering and smearing" it. Tensions between [China and Japan](#) have risen since Takaichi Sanae, Japan's prime

minister, said last month that Japan could defend Taiwan if it was attacked.

A fire at a nightclub in **Goa**, a western Indian state, killed 25 people. Local officials ordered an inquiry into the blaze, which police said began after a gas cylinder exploded. Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, said victims' families would receive compensation. Goa is popular with tourists: around 5.5m people visited the coastal state in the first half of this year.

**Benin's** government said it had thwarted an attempted coup and urged people "to go about their business as usual". Earlier soldiers took control of the state television channel and claimed to have overthrown Patrice Talon, the president. In a broadcast the group, calling itself the Military Committee for Refoundation, had said it was closing Benin's borders and suspending the constitution.

**Elon Musk** denied reports that **SpaceX**, his [rocketry company](#), was planning a share sale that would value it at \$800bn. Such a tag would make it America's most valuable private company, ahead of OpenAI. Mr Musk also criticised claims that SpaceX was "subsidised" by NASA, America's space agency, saying that the firm SpaceX won government contracts "because we offered the best product at the lowest price".

Lando Norris, a British driver for McLaren, won his first **Formula One** title after finishing third in the Abu Dhabi grand prix. He finished the season ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen, the winner of the last four F1 championships, who came first in the race. Mr Norris is the first Briton to win the title since Sir Lewis Hamilton in 2020.

**Word of the week:** Mega-merger. Large corporate deals, already worth \$700bn in 2025. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: Getty Images

## Diplomacy in Doha

A year ago, the Doha Forum was the hottest ticket in Middle Eastern diplomacy. The annual conference in Qatar's capital coincided with the fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. Officials from Russia, Iran and Turkey met on the sidelines to discuss the president's ignominious exit.

This weekend, with Assad's successor, [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), in attendance, the focus is on looking ahead. Nawaf Salam, Lebanon's prime minister, will sit for an interview on Sunday. It comes as many Lebanese [worry about renewed conflict](#) between Israel and Hizbullah, a Shia militant group. Earlier this week Lebanon sent a retired diplomat to negotiate with an Israeli envoy, the first direct talks in decades between the two countries. The negotiations may forestall another war. But Hizbullah refuses to relinquish its most advanced weapons, and the Lebanese army is incapable of seizing them. The reprieve may be only temporary.



Photograph: Getty Images

## A fire, then fury in Hong Kong

Hong Kong began holding elections to its Legislative Council on Sunday. It is just the second such vote since the central government in Beijing ruled that only “patriots”—ie, cheerleaders for China’s Communist Party—could stand. The restricted ballot is a reaction to widespread pro-democracy protests in 2019. Freedom-hungry Hong Kongers are therefore forced to register their discontent in other ways. In the first election under the new system, in December 2021, turnout was just 30%, a record low.

Lawmakers have spent months trying to coax residents to the ballot box. But turnout will again probably be paltry. The city is reeling from a devastating fire in a high-rise housing complex that killed at least 159 people and left 2,100 homeless. Many locals [are furious at the government’s response](#). A low turnout will displease the authorities in Hong Kong and Beijing, who crave a veneer of legitimacy. Instead it may show the depth of anger over the blaze.



Photograph: Getty Images

## The Kennedy Centre honours...Donald Trump

[The Kennedy Centre](#) Honours gala, which recognises contributions to American culture, is a prestigious affair. Those feted in the past include Tennessee Williams, Ella Fitzgerald, Leonard Bernstein and, more recently Lin-Manuel Miranda, the creator of “Hamilton”. It is usually an apolitical event. Sunday’s gala will be different.

The master of ceremonies is President Donald Trump. Earlier this year he took over the centre, saying it was [too “wokey”](#), and sacked half the board. The president apparently personally vetted this year’s honourees, who include Sylvester Stallone, of “Rocky” and “Rambo” fame. On Mr Trump’s watch, shows such as the Gay Men’s Chorus have been cancelled. The venue’s ticket sales have reportedly plummeted. On Friday the centre staged the FIFA World Cup draw, an event more fitting for Las Vegas. More shocking, the president recently half-joked that he will change the name of the institution—created as a cultural monument to a slain president—to the Trump-Kennedy Centre.



Photograph: AP

## A love triangle for eternity

Love triangles make for enticing stories. Literature is full of them: Helen, Menelaus and Paris in Greek mythology; Catherine, Heathcliff and Edgar in “Wuthering Heights”; Anna, Alexei and Vronsky in “Anna Karenina”. Depending on the circumstances, the situation can be humorous, tragic or poignant.

Lately screenwriters, too, seem to have fallen for love triangles, in films such as “Materialists”, a romantic comedy about a matchmaker, and [“The Summer I Turned Pretty”](#), a popular teen drama. In “Eternity”, just released in cinemas, Joan (played by Elizabeth Olsen) dies and reaches “the junction” between life and the afterlife. There are two men waiting for her: Joan has a week to choose whether to spend eternity with her first husband (Callum Turner), who died at war, or the man she spent the rest of her life with (Miles Teller). Wacky, witty and sentimental, this is a love triangle for the ages.

*Curiosity is the lust of the mind.*

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***Thomas Hobbes***