

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter

Taiwan's strongest **earthquake** in 25 years struck the east of the island. The 7.2-magnitude quake's epicentre was in the sea about 18km (11 miles) from the city of Hualien, and triggered tsunami warnings in Japan and the Philippines. Several buildings were damaged and the power supply disrupted in the capital, Taipei. TSMC, Taiwan's chipmaking giant, evacuated several of its factories. Details of casualties remain scant, although Taiwan's fire department suggested an early toll of one death and 50 injured.

NATO will discuss a plan to secure a five-year military aid package for **Ukraine** worth \$100bn when the [alliance's](#) foreign ministers meet on Wednesday. The proposal may be a way to "Trump-proof" assistance for Ukraine amid concerns that America could cut support should Donald Trump win the presidential election.

Volodymyr Zelensky, **Ukraine's** president, signed legislation lowering the age of **enlistment** from 27 to 25, overcoming his reticence about the move. In December Ukraine's then-commander-in-chief, Valery Zaluzhny, said he wanted to recruit a further [400,000 soldiers](#), but Mr Zelensky appeared to have decided against drafting younger soldiers. There are concerns that an imminent and big Russian push could punch through Ukraine's defences.

President Joe Biden said he was "outraged and heartbroken" about an Israeli strike that killed seven aid workers in **Gaza**. Mr Biden criticised [Israel](#) for not doing enough to protect aid workers and civilians, but did not signal any shift in America's military support for the country. Earlier Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime

minister, admitted that the “unintended strike” had killed “innocent people” and vowed to “ensure this isn’t repeated”.

The **World Bank** estimated that at least \$18.5bn-worth of infrastructure in **Gaza** has been destroyed in the war with Israel. That is equal to 97% of the combined GDP of the Palestinian territories in 2022. Damage to housing accounted for about three-quarters of the cost. As of January Gaza’s [water and sanitation system](#) were delivering less than 5% of pre-war output, said the bank.

Tesla delivered just under 387,000 vehicles in the three months to March, 8.5% lower than the same period last year and 20.2% below the previous quarter. Analysts had expected a figure of around 454,000. Growing competition from new EV makers, [especially China](#), partly explains the slump. Shares in the American firm have dropped by almost 30% this year.

The White House instructed NASA to develop a standardised time system for the **Moon**. It wants to establish an international norm in an age of [increasing lunar exploration](#). The Moon’s weaker gravitational forces means time there moves more quickly. A new time system would help lunar spacecraft fulfil their missions. America’s space agency has until 2026 to set up Co-ordinated Lunar Time.

Figure of the day: 26%, the amount the market for weight-loss drugs is expected to grow per year in the next five years. [Read the full story](#).

In yesterday’s World in Brief we wrongly wrote that Xi Jinping was China’s premier. We should have written that he is China’s president. Sorry.



Photo: AFP

A swing state goes to the polls

America's presidential election will probably be won [on the margins](#). One of the states with an outsize importance is Wisconsin, which holds its Republican and Democratic primaries on Tuesday. Party strategists will be paying less attention to the headline races—Donald Trump and Joe Biden are already the two parties' [unofficial nominees](#)—than to down-ballot ones.

Wisconsin is voting based on new district lines, which the governor signed into law last month. In December the state's Supreme Court [struck down](#) the legislative maps as unconstitutional. Previously, many electoral districts were gerrymandered to favour Republicans; in the new districts, races will be close. The head of Wisconsin's Democrats hopes that these competitive local elections will inspire [disaffected liberals](#) to turn out. That, in turn, will translate to votes for Mr Biden. The top Republican in Wisconsin's state assembly is sceptical of this bottom-up theory. Just like anywhere else, he argues, the Democratic base is merely "going to be motivated by hatred of Donald Trump".



Photo: Getty Images

Shell returns to court

In May 2021 The Hague's district court delivered a watershed [verdict](#). It declared that Shell was failing to do enough to prevent climate change, and thus endangering Dutch citizens' lives. It ordered the oil major to reduce its emissions—including those generated by consumers using its products—by 45% by 2030, relative to 2019 levels. Shell appealed.

On Tuesday a court began to hear that appeal. Over four days the company will face off against the group that brought the initial case, Milieudefensie—the Dutch branch of Friends of the Earth, an environmental organisation. Shell's argument, in part, is that Milieudefensie singled it out unfairly—it is not the only large fossil-fuel producer. Shell also swears that it intends to reduce emissions to net zero anyway (by 2050). It says the district court's timeline is unfeasible. Milieudefensie, meanwhile, is confident of victory. It says that Shell has backtracked on climate commitments made since the original ruling.



Photo: dpa

A bright spot amid Germany's economic gloom

On Tuesday Destatis, Germany's statistics office, published the annual inflation rate for March: 2.2%, the lowest for almost three years. Inflation has now fallen steadily from 3.7% in December (the figures for January and February were 2.9% and 2.5%, respectively), mostly because of a decline in energy prices and a slowdown in food inflation.

Elsewhere, the picture is still gloomy. Last year the economy shrank by 0.3%; this year it is forecast to grow little. This is mainly the result of sluggish public and corporate investment—a consequence of tight monetary policy—as well as an acute shortage of skilled labour. The [war in Ukraine](#) is making businesses anxious and energy prices remain high compared with those in America. Further ahead, prospects are a little rosier: growth for 2025, the year of the next federal elections, is forecast to be around 1.2%. Even that, though, is unlikely to be enough to keep the governing coalition in power.



Photo: Getty Images

The SEC's new climate-risk plan

Regulators and Wall Street lawyers will gather in Washington on Tuesday for the Securities and Exchange Commission's annual conference. Over two days officials from America's main financial regulator will lay out their policy priorities.

High on the agenda will be the SEC's plans to require **big firms** to disclose climate-related risks and greenhouse-gas emissions starting in 2026. The rules, given the green light last month, were watered down from their original version. The initial proposal, released in 2022, drew ire from Republicans and lobby groups. The SEC dropped a requirement that companies disclose "scope-3 emissions" (which include those generated by a firm's suppliers and end-users).

The final rules were still met with fierce criticism. Companies argue that disclosures will scare off investors, incentivising them to move assets somewhere with laxer environmental rules. A coalition of ten states has mounted a legal challenge. Expect the argument to continue, even though the plan has now been approved.



Photo: dpa

A new kind of Spanish holiday

“Spain is different”, ran a slogan from the 1960s intended to entice tourists. Northern Europeans headed to the country’s beaches, and sleepy Mediterranean towns like Benidorm became garish but successful destinations. Foreigners later discovered the cities, notably Barcelona. Last year Spain broke its record, with 85m visitors. [Tourism](#) is so important to the economy that Spaniards will watch Tuesday’s release of visitor statistics with the interest other countries pay to exports or consumer confidence.

But Spanish tourism faces a risk: the increasingly intense summer heat, especially in the popular south of the country. Water temperatures in the Mediterranean—as in much of the globe—are record-breaking. They topped 30°C last summer, making the sea hardly any relief from the sweltering air. That is bad news for Benidorm, but better for Spain’s cooler north coast. Visitors are discovering the attractions of cities like Gijón, Santander and San Sebastián. Climate change is making Spain different indeed.



Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each day this week. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and, as important, tell us the connecting theme. Email your responses (and include mention of your home city and country) by 1700 GMT on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

Tuesday: Which is the highest mountain in the United Kingdom?

Monday: Thomas Aquinas, the medieval theologian, was a member of which order of friars?

The artist is nothing without the gift, but the gift is nothing without work.

Émile Zola