

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

Israel scaled back its military operations in **Gaza** on Saturday after [Donald Trump](#) called for an end to air strikes, saying Hamas was prepared to release hostages under his proposed peace plan. Local authorities said at least 21 people were killed that day despite the slowdown. Pro-Palestinian protests took place across Europe on Saturday, with tens of thousands marching in Barcelona.

Takaichi Sanae won the contest to lead Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party, replacing Ishiba Shigeru, who stepped down in September. Ms Takaichi, a [nationalist security hawk](#), defeated Koizumi Shinjiro, the agriculture minister, in a run-off. She is set to be appointed as the country's prime minister after a parliamentary vote on October 15th. She would be the country's first female one.

Russian drone strikes hit a passenger train in **Ukraine's** northern Sumy region, injuring around 30 people, local officials said. One [drone](#) hit a locomotive and another exploded as civilians were being evacuated. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, accused Russia of deliberately targeting civilians. Russia has intensified strikes on Ukraine's railway network in recent weeks.

France's prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, plans to impose a new tax on people earning over €250,000 (\$294,000) a year to help

secure parliamentary support for his 2026 budget, *Les Echos*, a French newspaper, reported. Mr Lecornu, a centrist ally of President [Emmanuel Macron](#), is seeking support from the Socialist Party. The measure would ensure that high earners pay at least 20% of their income in tax.

Iran said it has executed six people accused of mounting attacks in the country with help from **Israel**. Authorities said the men were behind a series of deadly assaults on police and militia forces in the country's south. The executions mark one of Iran's biggest cases tied to Israel in recent years, and come amid a sweeping security crackdown.

OpenAI said copyright owners would have more control over their content on the firm's new video-generating platform, Sora. Sam Altman, [OpenAI's boss](#), suggested that television and movie studios would be able to block the use of their characters on Sora. The app allows users to employ artificial intelligence to create videos that can be sourced from copyrighted content.

A federal court in New York sentenced **Sean “Diddy” Combs** to more than four years in prison. In July a jury had found the music mogul guilty of prostitution-related charges, but acquitted him of sex-trafficking and racketeering. Shortly before his sentencing, Mr Combs apologised for his “disgusting” actions, but the judge said his “crimes were serious ones”. Mr Combs's lawyer said he would appeal the sentence.

Word of the week: *Famadihana*, the “turning of the bones”, a ceremonial exhumation of corpses in Madagascar to appease ancestors. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Getty Images

Takaichi Sanae wins Japan's leadership contest

[Takaichi Sanae](#) was elected as the new leader of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party on Saturday. The 64-year-old hardliner is poised to become the country's first female prime minister. She defeated Koizumi Shinjiro, a 44-year-old agriculture minister and son of a popular former prime minister, in a run-off, which was triggered by the resignation of Ishiba Shigeru following two electoral drubbings. In her victory speech, Ms Takaichi said she would "build a party that is energetic and optimistic" and one that could "turn people's anxieties into hope". Critics worry that she would shift the country's politics sharply to the right.

She will face big challenges. In late October Donald Trump will visit Tokyo. Mr Ishiba had struck a trade deal that lowered American tariffs on Japan to 15%, in exchange for a vague pledge that Japan would invest \$550bn in America. At home, inflation has sparked public anger. And with the LDP short of a majority, she must secure backing from opposition lawmakers just to become prime minister.



Photograph: EPA

How a new diet could change the world

“Let food be your medicine, and medicine your food,” Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician, once said. That sentiment is implicit throughout the new report of global food systems by the *EAT-Lancet* commission, an interdisciplinary group of scientists.

The report’s main recommendation is a “planetary health diet” that would help people live longer while benefitting the environment. It is mostly [plant-based](#) but allows for limited amounts of meat and dairy products. If everyone in the world adopted it, the researchers say 15m “premature” deaths might be averted annually by lessening the risks of conditions like type-2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and some cancers. And [CO₂ emissions](#) from food production—which the researchers calculate to be nearly 30% of the world’s total—would fall by more than half.

But the reality is that such changes remain well out of reach for many. While the world produces more than enough calories for everyone, the authors stress that at least 1bn people remain undernourished.



Photograph: A24 Films

A different side of “The Rock”

Before Dwayne Johnson became one of Hollywood’s most bankable stars, he was a professional wrestler—and a popular one. He fought first under the ring name “Flex Kavana” before going on to win multiple titles as “The Rock”. But his screen success has stemmed more from his good looks and innate geniality than his acting talent.

That may change with his new film “The Smashing Machine”, released this weekend. He stars as Mark Kerr, a troubled mixed martial-arts fighter, opposite Emily Blunt as his long-suffering wife. Mr Johnson is nearly unrecognisable. To transform him into Mr Kerr (a real-life fighter), the film’s director, [Benny Safdie](#), put him in a dark wig, hid his tattoos and used prosthetics to alter the shape of his brow and nose. Mr Johnson’s character struggles with substance abuse and the toll of a life spent punching and being punched. The film has generated [Oscar](#) buzz for Mr Johnson, who may now add “serious actor” to his formidable list of achievements.



Photograph: Shutterstock

Weekend profile: Andrej Babis, the Czech billionaire making a political comeback

“Ano, zase bude lip” (“Yes, it will be better again”), promises a campaign poster showing [Andrej Babis](#) in front of a shimmering Czech flag. The 71-year-old billionaire, who was prime minister between 2017 and 2021, is hoping to return to office at parliamentary elections this weekend.

His party, ANO, is polling at around 31%, far ahead of the centre-right SPOLU (“Together”), led by Petr Fiala, the incumbent prime minister. But Mr Babis has been dogged by allegations of misuse of European Union funds, which he denies. And the country’s European allies are worried about his attitudes towards the [EU](#) and [NATO](#).

Mr Babis was born in 1954 in Bratislava, now the capital of Slovakia, to a Slovak diplomat father and a Carpathian German mother. In 1980 he joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. It is alleged that he became an agent for the Czechoslovak secret police, which he denies. After the dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1992, he made a fortune taking over Agrofert, a conglomerate that had been a subsidiary of a state-owned trading firm. Today Agrofert is the Czech Republic’s biggest private employer, making everything from food to fertiliser.

His ownership could present conflicts of interest. In August the Czech government demanded Agrofert repay more than €208m (\$244m) in farm subsidies it received when Mr Babis was prime minister. He had put Agrofert into trusts, but the courts found he still controlled them, which he denies. In another case, he allegedly illegally received millions in EU subsidies designed for small businesses by transferring ownership of a conference centre from Agrofert to his family. He denies those charges, too.

During Mr Babis's last premiership protesters accused him of trying to capture the country's institutions. After police recommended he be charged with fraud he sacked the justice minister. And he allegedly used his ownership of media companies for political advantage.

Mr Babis questions the West's support for Ukraine and NATO's commitments. He vows to fight the EU's climate plans and migration rules. He wants to remain in the EU and NATO, but the only parties willing to enter a coalition with his are a Eurosceptic outfit and one whose leader calls for an EU withdrawal and a NATO membership referendum.

Mr Babis understands the most important issue for Czechs is the economy. Although the current government's austerity measures have stabilised state finances and wages have been rising, his supporters think a rich man will know how to enrich them.

But even if he forms a government, another obstacle remains. Petr Pavel, the largely ceremonial president who supports the EU and the transatlantic alliance, could block his appointment. If the president decides to exercise such power, expect a savage fight.



Illustration: The Economist

Mini-crossword

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

Our crossword has two sets of clues, one for seasoned cruciverbalists and the other for less experienced solvers. Both give the same answers, all of which feature in articles in this week's edition of The Economist:

Cryptic clues

1 across - Kansas city found in Norwich, it appears (7)

2 across - Pyromaniac hides in the country (7)

3 across - Sounds like what a cobbler might be doing, or a doctor (7)

1 down - LA weather girl mixed up a patriot and a pirate (6,7)

Straight clues

1 across - City in Kansas where Koch Industries was founded and a certain lineman comes from (7)

2 across - Moldova’s neighbour and home to a famous fictional count (7)

3 across - NASA researchers have found that light from LEDs has this property (7)

1 down - Elizabethan explorer and tobacco purveyor (6,7)

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

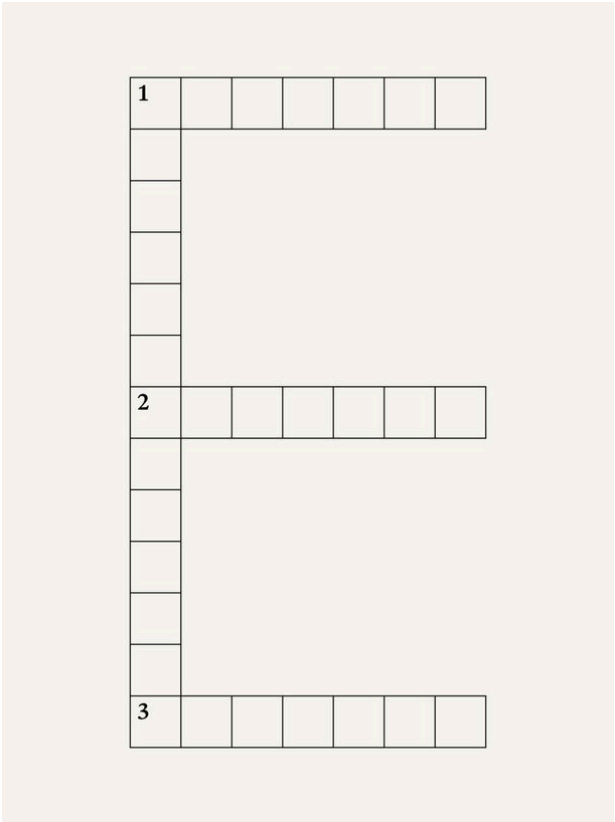


Image: .



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:

Maureen Evans, Vernon, Canada

Subash Bijlani, Gurgaon, India

Melanie Mazier, Schieren, Luxembourg

They all gave the correct answers of: Bee Gees, The Kinks, The Beach Boys, Van Halen and Oasis. The theme is that they all contain brothers: Barry, Maurice and Robin Gibb; Ray and Dave Davies; Brian, Carl and Dennis Wilson; Alex and Eddie Van Halen; and Liam and Noel Gallagher

The questions were:

Monday: Which band was responsible for most of the biggest hits of the "Saturday Night Fever" soundtrack?

Tuesday: Which British band's first hit was "You Really Got Me" in 1964?

Wednesday: Which band's first top-ten hit "Surfin' USA" was based on a Chuck Berry song?

Thursday: David Lee Roth was the lead singer of which rock band?

Friday: Which rock band's reunion tour began in July in Cardiff and is scheduled to end (provided there are no bust-ups) in Brazil in November?

*If we are to better the future, we
must disturb the present.*

Catherine Booth