

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

Binyamin Netanyahu said Israeli negotiators would [travel to Egypt on Monday](#) to begin **Gaza** ceasefire talks. Earlier Marco Rubio, America's secretary of state, said the war "has not yet ended", and that freeing hostages held by Hamas is only the initial step of **Donald Trump's** [peace plan](#). Meanwhile Israel struck targets across Gaza on Sunday, killing at least 19 people, local officials said.

Mr Trump authorised the **deployment** of 300 **National Guard troops** to Illinois. The White House blamed "ongoing violent riots and lawlessness" for the decision. JB Pritzker, the state's Democratic governor, described [the move](#) as "absolutely outrageous". In Portland, Oregon, a federal judge temporarily blocked a similar order to deploy troops to the city, ruling that the president's rationale was "simply untethered to the facts".

Russia launched a large missile and drone assault on **Ukraine**, killing at least five people and damaging power and industrial sites across several regions, officials said. Four deaths were reported in Lviv, near Poland, and one in Zaporizhzhia. [Ukraine](#) said more than 50 missiles and 500 drones were fired. Poland said it had deployed fighter jets to protect its airspace.

The **White House** said it will begin mass layoffs of federal workers if talks with [Democrats](#) to end the **government shutdown** collapse. Mr Trump previously said that “Democrat agencies” would be targeted. The shutdown began on Wednesday after Senate Democrats rejected a Republican-backed temporary funding bill. The upper chamber will vote again on Monday. The two sides remain deadlocked over healthcare spending.

Andrej Babis, a populist billionaire and former prime minister, [won](#) the **Czech Republic’s general election**. His ANO party finished first with 35% of the vote after a bitter campaign. It will need to form a coalition. Mr Babis, who calls himself a “Trumpist”, wants to reduce foreign aid, including assistance to Ukraine.

OPEC+, a coalition of oil-producing countries led by **Saudi Arabia** and **Russia**, said it will increase output by 137,000 barrels a day in November—the same rise as last month—despite concern that global supply may soon exceed demand. The group is boosting production to claw back market share from American producers. Brent crude fell below \$65 a barrel on Thursday.

Heavy monsoon rains in **Nepal** caused landslides and floods that have killed at least 47 people since Friday, officials said. Most of the deaths were in Ilam district near the Indian border, where 35 people were buried in a series of landslides. Several roads and bridges were destroyed. Nine people are still missing.

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

Britain's woebegone Conservatives tack to the right

The Conservative Party meets for its annual conference in Manchester on Sunday. Once the most successful election-winning machine in the West, it is now a diminished force. It was reduced to a rump of 121 seats in last year's general election. Since then things have got worse still. The Tories have lost support to Reform UK, a right-wing populist party. Just 17% of Britons support them, according to [our poll tracker](#).

Kemi Badenoch, the Conservatives' leader, is trying to reverse the party's slide in the polls by moving it to the right. She is expected to announce that the party would shred climate targets and leave the European Convention on Human Rights. Her shadow cabinet will talk a lot about gender politics and free speech. Still, doubts are growing about Ms Badenoch's leadership, especially her ability to outdo Nigel Farage, Reform's leader. Many Tories think it is unlikely that she will still be leader by the next general election.



Photograph: Reuters

The end of Australia's economic golden age

Australia's government finances are in rude health. According to figures announced this week, the country had a smaller budget deficit in the year to June 30th than it forecast it would six months ago. As a share of GDP, government revenue was the highest in a quarter of a century, in part due to high commodity prices and greater income-tax receipts.

But Australia's slimming deficit masks [deeper problems](#) plaguing its economy. The country now ranks second-last in the OECD for productivity growth. Since 2021 Australians' disposable incomes have declined faster than in any other country in the OECD, squeezed by weak wage growth and tax brackets that aren't indexed to inflation. Young Australians fret they won't live as well as their parents.

A slowing Chinese economy means Australia can no longer rely on shipping mountains of iron ore to China. Instead, Australia's economy needs countless smaller reforms to slash red tape, spur innovation and boost workers' productivity.



Photograph: Getty Images

Syria's flawed attempt at democracy

On Sunday Syrians will choose their first parliament since the fall of Bashar al-Assad, the former dictator. Electoral colleges made up of around 7,000 members will select two-thirds of parliament's 210 seats. [Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), the president and a former Islamist militant who ousted Mr Assad, will appoint the remainder.

Authorities had previously argued it was too soon to hold a direct vote: after a decade-long civil war, they do not even have reliable population data. They have a point. Good reasons exist to be cynical about the process. No elections will be held in parts of the northeast, due to tensions between the Kurdish-led local authorities and the central government, or in Suwayda, a southern province [ravaged by sectarian conflict](#) this summer. Just 14% of candidates are women, below the government's target of 20%.



Photograph: Getty Images

Why Orwell still matters

Born in 1903 in colonial-era India, [George Orwell](#) lived through a tumultuous era. The left calls him a hero, though he criticised its distaste for patriotism. The right claims him for his defence of free speech, too, despite the fact he was a democratic socialist.

“Orwell: 2+2=5”, a documentary by Raoul Peck, a Haitian filmmaker, sets out to prove that the British essayist and novelist remains relevant to an age that risks becoming as turbulent as his own. It achieves this, but not always in the way it intends.

Combining a voiceover with archive footage, it layers Orwell’s words over moments from his life, as well as onto contemporary events such as the January 6th riot. But often it cherry-picks Orwell’s arguments to make blunt political points. Viewers may finish “Orwell: 2+2=5” regretting that few contemporary polemicists subject their own political views to the same scrutiny as Orwell did his.



Photograph: EPA

The hottest race in Formula One

On Sunday Britain's George Russell won the [Formula One](#) Grand Prix in Singapore, beating the Netherlands' Max Verstappen, the previous champion. It was a busy few days for the city-state, which hosted conferences and concerts, too. Racecar-drivers and concert-goers alike faced a common foe: high humidity and temperatures that exceeded 31°C. The race was the first in Formula One to be declared a "heat hazard".

But visitors no doubt found reprieve in one of Singapore's many air-conditioned shopping malls. They may have contributed to an expected 7% rise in luxury sales in the city-state in 2025 from the previous year, to S\$13.9bn (\$10.8bn). While demand for luxury goods elsewhere is cooling, in Singapore it is as hot as ever. That is good news for Louis Vuitton, which is now Formula One's main sponsor.



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.

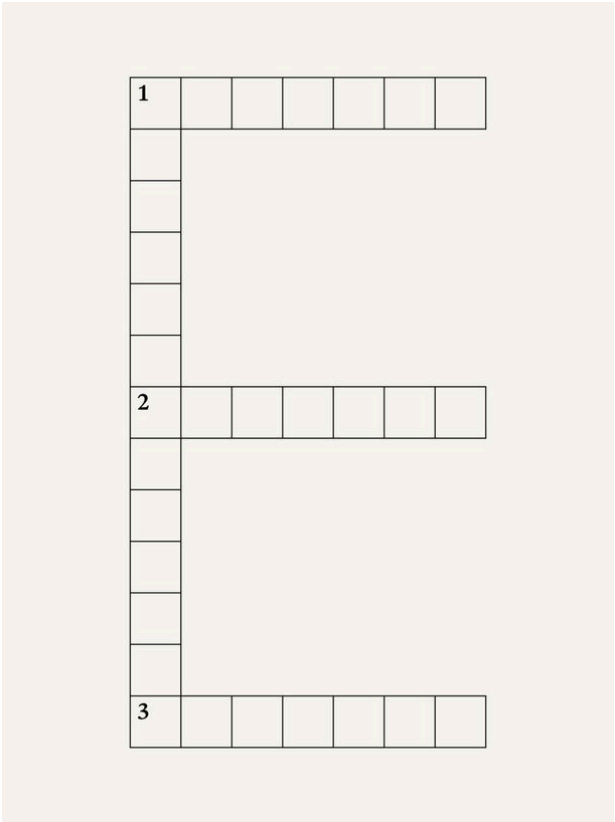


Image: .



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