

# The world in brief

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Photograph: Reuters

## Listen to the briefing



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**Poland** requested a formal consultation with NATO allies after **Russian drones** entered Polish airspace during an overnight attack on western Ukraine. Donald Tusk, the prime minister, told parliament that the Polish army shot down three or four of 19 drones. It is the first time a member of the alliance has engaged in a military confrontation with Russia since [the war in Ukraine began](#).

French police arrested almost 300 people as “Block Everything” protests spread in Paris and other cities. The demonstrations, in opposition to Emmanuel Macron, **France’s** centrist president, aim to disrupt transport and other infrastructure. His close ally, **Sébastien Lecornu**, a former defence minister, took office as the country’s prime minister on Wednesday.

Donald Trump said he was “very unhappy about every aspect” of an [Israeli attack](#) aimed at assassinating **Hamas** leaders in **Doha**.

America's president promised to issue a full statement on Wednesday. Hamas said the strike killed five of its members, though claimed its leadership survived. Qatar said a Qatari security officer was also killed.

**Novo Nordisk** said it would cut 9,000 jobs, around 11% of its global workforce. The Danish firm also lowered its profit forecast for the year, citing one-off restructuring costs. Sales of its weight-loss drugs, Ozempic and Wegovy, are under pressure from products made by competitors such as [Eli Lilly](#), an American company.

**Klarna** reportedly raised almost \$1.4bn in its initial public offering, which was more than 20 times oversubscribed. The Swedish [buy-now, pay-later firm](#) said it priced shares at \$40, giving it a market valuation of more than \$15bn. Shares will begin trading on Wednesday. The company paused its listing plans earlier this year because of market volatility caused by Donald Trump's tariffs.

A federal judge temporarily blocked Mr Trump from firing **Lisa Cook**, a Federal Reserve governor. Mr Trump [sacked Ms Cook](#) last month, ostensibly over allegations of financial misconduct, which she denies, but probably also because the central bank has refused to cut interest rates as fast as he demands. The judge said the allegations were unsubstantiated, and allowed Ms Cook to continue in her post until her case is heard.

For the first time [more children in the world](#) are **obese** than underweight, according to a study by UNICEF. A fifth of children aged five to 19 are overweight, largely because they eat lots of [highly processed food](#); 42% of those children are obese. Meanwhile, the prevalence of severely undernourished children in 190 countries has dropped from nearly 13% to 9.2% since 2000.

**Figure of the day:** 22%, the share of Ethiopia's 122m population connected to the grid. A new mega dam could change that. [Read the full story.](#)

*How about some cruciverbalism with your coffee? We now publish our mini crossword, with a choice of straight or cryptic clues, every weekday. [Play the latest puzzle.](#)*



Photograph: EPA

## China's leaders face up to deflation

“What’s so bad about deflation?” Xi Jinping, China’s ruler, once asked his advisers, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. “Don’t people like it when things are cheaper?” Things have been getting cheaper in China for more than two years now, by some measures. Figures released on Wednesday showed that factory-gate prices fell year on year in August, as they have for the 34 previous months.

China’s leaders seem to have finally concluded that this [deflationary trend](#) is a bad thing. In recent months they have warned against the dangers of excessive, “involutionary” competition, which drives prices below costs. They have increased scrutiny of mining permits, reprimanded electric carmakers for aggressive discounts and urged food-delivery platforms to treat their drivers better. But these efforts to restrain supply are unlikely to defeat deflation without a stronger push to lift demand through greater public spending. Deflation makes things cheaper. But a fiscal cure for deflation is often expensive.



Photograph: AP

## Israel's risky escalation

The damage done to Hamas by [an Israeli strike on its leadership](#) in Qatar on Tuesday is still unclear. The militant group claims its top brass survived. Even if that is true, negotiations for a ceasefire in Gaza are almost certainly over, at least in Qatar, which may abandon its role as mediator. If talks resume they will probably move to Egypt.

Qatar had previously believed that America would restrain Israel from attacking on its soil. The Trump administration criticised Israel's strike, but was either unable or unwilling to stop it. It might boost the standing at home of Binyamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, but it will also exacerbate the bitter debate over the war in Gaza, which most Israelis want to end. Mr Netanyahu has resisted such calls at the behest of his far-right allies, who want to reoccupy Gaza and displace its population. For other countries in the region, fears of the war spilling over their borders will only grow.



Photograph: Getty Images

## The first task for France's next PM

France is bracing itself for a day of blockages on Wednesday as protesters seek to disrupt the country. The movement, brought together under the slogan “*Bloquons tout*”, or “Let’s block everything”, emerged via social media, the same platform that gave rise to the *gilets jaunes* (yellow vests) protests in 2018. France’s more militant unions have now joined the new movement, as has Jean-Luc Mélenchon’s hard-left Unsubmissive France party. The unions are also organising a day of strikes on September 18th.

The movement is disparate and its demands unclear, besides a call for President Emmanuel Macron to resign. Protesters blocked some airports, train stations and road junctions in Paris and other cities. A heavy police presence was deployed. The blockages are the first test for Mr Macron’s new prime minister, Sébastien Lecornu, formerly the defence minister, who takes office on Wednesday. The unrest will be a reminder that he inherits a [discontented and unstable country](#).



Photograph: AP

## Talking up the state of Europe

On Wednesday Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, gave her annual “state of the union” speech in front of members of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The speech traditionally marks the end of the long summer holiday for the European Union’s political class. This year, it has been a few months to forget, as the bloc acceded to a lopsided trade deal with America.

Mrs von der Leyen tried to persuade MEPS to sign off on the agreement. She also spoke of Europe’s enduring support for Ukraine, the need to bolster innovation, spend more on defence and forge ahead on tackling illegal migration. The EU’s figurehead is under pressure. She could face two votes of no confidence brought on by rivals from the hard left and right. Still, her opponents lack the support to topple her.





Photograph: Getty Images

## **An unwelcome guest in the Pacific islands**

The leaders of eighteen Pacific island countries, including Australia and New Zealand, are holding annual talks in the Solomon Islands on Wednesday. [China](#) is not invited, but the country's diplomats are nonetheless planning to be in Honiara, the host country's capital, to announce new aid packages and business deals.

China is seeking access to ports and airfields throughout the Pacific. A permanent beachhead in the region would allow it to complicate the plans of America and its allies in the event of conflict over Taiwan. To block China's efforts, America and Australia have been signing deals with Pacific island countries worth billions of dollars on the condition that they keep China out. Seeking another way in, China has struck agreements in recent years to deploy police to three countries in the region, including the Solomon Islands. If China's envoys were to try to push past the doors into Wednesday's meeting, they would have muscle on hand to help.







Illustration: The Economist

## 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 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick randomly from those with the right answers and crown three winners on Saturday.

**Wednesday:** Which British rock band had a hit single with “Love Will Tear Us Apart” before reforming as New Order?

**Tuesday:** What title did Napoleon Bonaparte assume in December 1804?

*Between too early and too late,  
there is never more than a  
moment.*

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***Franz Werfel***