

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: Getty Images

**Donald Trump** said he authorised a covert Central Intelligence Agency [operation](#) in **Venezuela**. Confirming a report from the *New York Times*, he said, “we are certainly looking at land now, because we’ve got the sea very well under control.” Mr Trump has [expanded his war on drug-traffickers](#) in the southern Caribbean but he declined to say whether the CIA was authorised to “take out” Nicolás Maduro, Venezuela’s dictator.

Aid trucks began entering **Gaza**, but **Israel** said the operation could be scaled back and vehicles delayed because of Hamas’s slow return of deceased hostages. The militant group said it needed help to retrieve the remaining bodies, which are buried [under rubble](#). Hamas has returned nine of 28 bodies.

A federal judge in California blocked the **Trump** administration from [firing 4,100 federal workers](#) during a partial government shutdown. Unions had argued that slashing jobs across more than 30 federal agencies was illegal. The judge noted that the layoffs seemed to unlawfully target Democrats. Her ruling will probably be quickly appealed.

**Scott Bessent**, America’s treasury secretary, said he was putting together a \$20bn package to support **Argentina’s** [economy](#). He

said the “private-sector solution” would be separate from a \$20bn swap line the Treasury already promised to Argentina’s central bank, adding that some banks and sovereign-wealth funds have signalled interest in participating. The Treasury also recently bought Argentine pesos.

[Ahmed al-Sharaa](#), Syria’s president, met **Vladimir Putin** in Moscow, hoping to “redefine” his country’s relationship with Russia. Mr Putin harbours Bashar al-Assad, Syria’s former dictator, whom he backed against Mr al-Sharaa’s rebel forces during the country’s civil war. Mr al-Sharaa suggested he would allow Russian military bases to remain in Syria; Mr Putin promised energy expertise and humanitarian aid.

**Pakistan** and **Afghanistan** agreed to a 48-hour ceasefire after fighting broke out last week along the countries’ contested [border](#). Earlier on Wednesday Pakistan reportedly launched air strikes on the Afghan cities of Kabul and Kandahar. Pakistan denies it initiated the latest round of violence. Both sides reported civilian deaths.

**United Airlines** forecast its highest-ever revenue in the fourth quarter, boosted by rising travel demand. [The American airline](#) expanded its flying capacity by 7% in the third quarter, while rivals scaled back because of an oversupply of flights earlier in the year. Scott Kirby, United’s boss, said the carrier’s bet on improved amenities, like faster onboard Wi-Fi, was paying off.

**Figure of the day:** 500%, the surge in the American stockmarket between 1921 and 1929 before its crash. [Read the full story.](#)



Photograph: AP

## Cracks open in the Gaza ceasefire

The [truce](#) between Israel and Hamas is under strain. Hamas has failed to fulfill its commitment to return all Israeli hostages, living and dead; it has sent back only nine of the 28 deceased hostages. The militant group has executed people it accuses of collaborating with Israel in Gaza. And although Israel is retreating from populated areas of the enclave (it still controls roughly half the territory), reports of continued clashes and deadly shootings near its military lines are testing the peace deal's fragile stability.

Despite these obstacles, talks over the second phase of Donald Trump's peace plan are under way. The post-war [framework](#) calls for the establishment of a technocratic government in Gaza, the deployment of an international peacekeeping force and the disarmament of Hamas. The proposals, which remain highly contentious for both sides, may require a renewed push from Mr Trump to salvage the peace effort.



Photograph: EPA

## New York City's would-be mayors face off

With three weeks to go until New York City's mayoral election, Zohran Mamdani, a 33-year-old democratic socialist, is leading in the polls. On Thursday New Yorkers will watch the first television debate among the three remaining candidates: [Mr Mamdani](#), the Democrat; Andrew Cuomo, a former governor of New York who is running as an independent; and Curtis Sliwa, a red-beret-wearing Republican, who runs a group of crime-fighting volunteers.

Mr Mamdani, who beat Mr Cuomo in the [Democratic primary](#), is unabashedly left wing. He focuses on affordability, which appeals to many voters, and wants to raise taxes on the rich, which worries business leaders. To reassure them he has met some, including Mike Bloomberg, a billionaire and former mayor. Mr Mamdani brands himself "Donald Trump's worst nightmare—as a progressive, Muslim immigrant". If he wins, he and the Big Apple can expect plenty of hostile attention from the president.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Geopolitics stalks the Arctic

On Thursday politicians, scientists and environmentalists gather in Reykjavik, Iceland's capital, for the Arctic Circle Assembly. The annual summit bills itself as the world's largest gathering on Arctic affairs. Global powers long considered the region a semi-neutral zone—the main debates were about climate change and fragile ecosystems. Now geopolitics is high on the agenda. Donald Trump talks of a contest with China and Russia for [Arctic dominance](#). To strengthen America's position, the president has suggested making Canada the 51st state and annexing Greenland, a semi-autonomous Danish territory.

But he may be looking in the wrong direction. True, Chinese icebreakers have shown up off Greenland; Russian activities near [Svalbard](#), a Norwegian Arctic archipelago, cause concern. But NATO has strong defences in the North Atlantic. A greater challenge is in the North Pacific. Chinese and Russian planes and warships patrol the seas and skies near Alaska. If Mr Trump wants to project Arctic power, he may need to bolster America's remote north-west.







Illustration: David Simonds

## America and Europe clash over climate policy

Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Union's economy commissioner, is expected to meet Scott Bessent, America's treasury secretary, in Washington on Thursday. Europe's green agenda currently dominates the bloc's talks with the Trump administration. America wants Europe to weaken parts of its [environmental](#) legislation, arguing that new EU rules place unfair burdens on foreign companies.

America wants the EU to drop requirements for non-European firms to publish "climate-transition plans". It also seeks to exempt American businesses from the EU's corporate due-diligence directive, which obliges firms to identify human-rights and environmental harms that are caused by elements of their supply chains. The EU insists that the measures are essential to its green ambitions, even as many European businesses also [complain](#) that they are burdensome. The dispute comes just months after both sides struck a tariff deal to avoid a trade war. Mr Dombrovskis will now seek to defend the EU's climate rules without jeopardising that truce.



Photograph: Avalon

## Microsoft's handheld Xbox

Gamers on the go will be able to play titles such as “Starfield” and “Halo Infinite” from Thursday, when Microsoft starts selling a handheld version of its Xbox console. The oddly named ROG Xbox Ally, a collaboration with Asus, a Taiwanese hardware-maker, starts at \$600, 50% more than the cheapest home Xbox. At nearly twice the length of an [iPhone](#) and four times the weight, the device requires deep pockets in every sense.

Handheld consoles were nearly killed off by smartphones, which double up as passable games machines for most people. [Nintendo](#) revived the market in 2017 with its Switch, which became a smash hit. As improvements in tech drive diminishing returns in the gaming experience, consumers have become willing to trade power for portability and price. The Switch 2 was launched in June. Sony is said to be working on a handheld PlayStation. Portable play is making a comeback.





Illustration: The Economist

## Daily quiz

We will serve you a new question each weekday. On Friday your challenge is to give us all five answers and tell us the theme. Email your responses (and your home city and country) by 1700 BST on Friday to [\[email protected\]](#). We'll pick three winners at random and crown them on Saturday.

**Thursday:** Which ghost story by Susan Hill was turned into a 2012 film starring Daniel Radcliffe?

**Wednesday:** Which two-person team wrote the controversial study “Human Sexual Response”?

*A thing is not necessarily true  
because a man dies for it.*

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***Oscar Wilde***