

The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AFP

A preliminary report into last month's **Air India crash** found that switches controlling the flow of fuel to the plane's engines flipped to the "cut-off" position seconds after take-off. India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau said that at this stage there were "no recommended actions" to GE Aerospace, whose engines were used in the plane, or Boeing, the aircraft's manufacturer. [The accident](#) killed 270 people.

American [stock indices](#) fell slightly after **Donald Trump** issued his latest tariff threat: a levy of 35% on Canadian goods from August 1st, unless it strikes a new trade deal. Meanwhile Mr Trump told NBC News that he expected to soon notify the **European Union** of the bloc's new tariff rates; the EU said it was waiting for America to sign off on a preliminary agreement.

Revenue gathered from **tariffs** hit a record for the nine months of the fiscal year to June, in America, passing the \$100bn mark for the first time. Customs duties last month quadrupled to \$27.2bn from a year before on a gross basis, according to the Treasury Department. Its head, Scott Bessent, said that America was "reaping the rewards" of Mr Trump's trade agenda. The president has threatened

that new tariffs on imports from many countries will [come into force](#) on August 1st.

Russia pummelled **western Ukraine** with drones and missiles that struck sites near the borders with Moldova and Romania. It hit the city of Chernivtsi, home to some 265,000 people, for the first time in its full-scale war. Two people were killed and more than a dozen were injured. Russia has ramped up drone production recently, in order to [intensify its bombardments](#).

America's State Department reportedly fired more than 1,300 employees as part of the administration's efforts to [downsize the federal workforce](#). Notices, informing staff that their positions had been "abolished", were sent to 1,107 civil servants and 246 foreign-service officers, according to media reports. Employees at the State Department held a "clap-out" for their dismissed colleagues as they left the building on Friday.

Kraft Heinz is reportedly planning to split itself into two companies, a decade after Warren Buffett and 3G Capital, a private-equity firm, merged them into one packaged-foods company. The combined firm's stock [has fallen](#) by over 60% since 2015. One of the spun-off companies would reportedly offer grocery staples, while the other would focus on faster-growing condiments.

The United Nations said at least 798 Palestinians were killed near aid-distribution sites in **Gaza** between May 27th and July 7th. Last month *Haaretz*, a newspaper, published reports that Israeli soldiers had been ordered to shoot at Palestinians near the [controversial sites](#), which are run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, an American-backed group. Binyamin Netanyahu, Israel's prime minister, called the reports a "blood libel".

Word of the week: *Izinkabi*, the Zulu word for hitmen, who are on the rise in South Africa. [Read the full story](#).



Photograph: Getty Images

Will there be a Gaza ceasefire?

Negotiations over a [ceasefire in Gaza](#) are slowly moving forward. Mediators from America, Qatar and Egypt have proposed a 60-day truce in exchange for the phased release of Israeli hostages and a commitment to talks on ending the war. Hamas and Israel have reportedly accepted the outline, but disagreements between them could still kill the deal. On Thursday [Binyamin Netanyahu](#), Israel's prime minister, said that he hoped he could secure a ceasefire "in a few days" but reiterated that the war would not end unless [Hamas](#) is fully disarmed. He also demanded that Gaza be demilitarised and that the militia be stripped of its ability to govern.

Hamas, at the same time, is demanding guarantees that a temporary truce will lead to a full ceasefire—something Israel has so far refused to provide. Meanwhile, the war grinds on. At least 18 Palestinians were killed on Friday, including ten near an aid centre. An Israeli strike on Thursday killed ten children near a medical centre; Israel's army said the attack killed a Hamas militant.

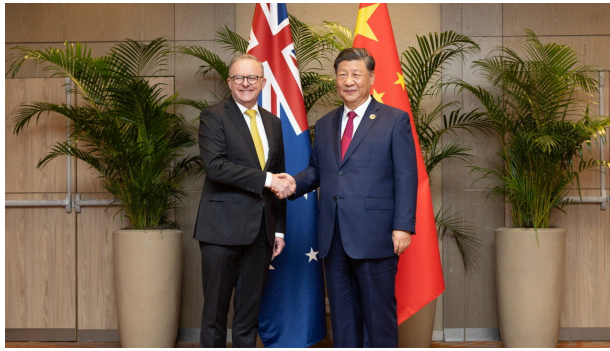


Photograph: Getty Images

How civil-rights activists view Trump

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People begins its annual convention in North Carolina on Saturday—with a notable invitation unsent. For the first time in the civil-rights group’s 116-year history, the sitting president has not been asked to attend. In a statement Derrick Johnson, the NAACP’s president, criticised Donald Trump for undermining democracy, attacking civil rights and issuing unconstitutional executive orders. “The NAACP isn’t advancing anything but hate and division,” the White House shot back.

Both Democratic and Republican presidents have addressed the convention over the years. (Mr Trump was invited to do so during his first term but repeatedly declined.) The last Republican president to give a speech was George W. Bush in 2006; he lamented how both his party and black voters “wrote off” one another and vowed to “change the relationship”. Today black voters still overwhelmingly support Democrats—but Mr Trump doubled [his support among the demographic](#) between the 2020 and 2024 elections.



Photograph: Getty Images

Australia's balancing act

On Saturday Anthony Albanese, Australia's prime minister, leaves for his second official trip to China. The Asian country is Australia's biggest trading partner and its main source of international students. The countries' free-trade agreement, now a decade old, will dominate discussions.

Mr Albanese says Australia will co-operate “where we can” with China, but he has also pledged to “disagree where we must”. China is eager to expand the trade pact to cover AI, for example, but the prime minister will be wary of collaborating too closely on sensitive emerging technology.

Australia has long relied on China for prosperity and America for security—an arrangement that has become [more precarious](#) since Donald Trump took office. Mr Trump wants Australia to increase defence spending, and could soon insist on new commitments to fight alongside America. China rejects this “cold war mentality”, but it spooked Australia by sending warships on an unusual jaunt into its waters in February. Mr Albanese will seek to please his host without angering his ally.



Photograph: Kirstin Shearer Photography

Let the Island Games begin

Around 22,000 people live on Scotland's remote [Orkney Islands](#). Its residents can expect a little extra company for the next week. On Saturday Orkney will begin hosting the Island Games, an Olympic-style competition that brings together teams from non-sovereign territories of European countries, such as the Cayman Islands, Greenland and Gozo. Athletes will compete for medals across 12 sporting disciplines, including archery, gymnastics and swimming.

Orkney has proved a controversial host of the biennial event. Unlike its predecessors, which include Jersey (with a population of 103,000), the islands lack accommodation to house the 2,000 athletes due to participate. Organisers have converted local schools into makeshift dormitories. Some athletes receive subsidies or sponsorship—but many are paying to participate and are disgruntled by the digs on offer. Visitors have been promised a “warm Orcadian welcome”. Participants may prefer a good night's sleep.



Photograph: Getty Images

Weekend profile: Gianni Infantino, FIFA's strongman-loving boss

This week a motley crew gathered in Trump Tower to toast the New York skyscraper's latest tenant: [FIFA](#), football's governing body. Eric Trump, the president's son; Ronaldo, a Brazilian footballing great; and a handful of [FIFA](#) bigwigs beamed for the cameras. The biggest wig there was [Gianni Infantino](#), [FIFA](#)'s divisive president. He also unveiled the trophy of the [Club World Cup](#). The tournament's final takes place in New Jersey on July 13th between Chelsea, an English team, and Paris Saint-Germain ([PSG](#)), a French one.

The tournament is Mr Infantino's pet project, part of his promise to create more footballing opportunities for nations outside Europe. He has given it a glow-up, securing it a prime summer slot and expanding the number of teams from seven to 32. This has given clubs from Brazil, Saudi Arabia, and New Zealand, among others, the opportunity to play against European giants, whom he promised enormous amounts of money. Chelsea and [PSG](#) have earned \$108m from reaching the final and the tournament's winner will pocket another \$9.5m.

Mr Infantino seems an unlikely champion of a new footballing order. He was born in Switzerland in 1970 to Italian parents. A polyglot and lawyer, he began working in 2000 at [UEFA](#), European

football's governing body, where he climbed the ranks to become the right-hand-man to the president, Michel Platini. In 2015 corruption charges brought down FIFA's long-serving president, Sepp Blatter. Mr Platini, who appeared to be the next in line for that post, was targeted by the same investigation. Mr Infantino seized the moment like a striker spotting an open goal. He told the press he would clean up the organisation; to members, he vowed to increase FIFA's revenue.

Nine years into his presidency, Mr Infantino has kept at least one of his promises. Independent estimates suggest that FIFA is on course to double its revenue (to \$13bn) between the World Cup in 2022 and the next in 2026.

But in winning new friends for FIFA he has angered long-established ones. He backed Qatar's controversial bid to host the flagship tournament in 2022. He brought FIFA's annual roadshow to Rwanda in 2023, showing support for its dictator, Paul Kagame. And he has struck up a close relationship with Donald Trump ahead of the 2026 World Cup, which will be partly hosted by America. Perhaps most controversially, Mr Infantino steered the 2034 World Cup to Saudi Arabia, sidestepping the usual host-selection process.

Mr Infantino appears unbothered by his critics. Earlier this year FIFA members gathered in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay, for the organisation's congress. The start was delayed three hours: Mr Infantino had been held up by meetings with Mr Trump, the Emir of Qatar and Muhammad bin Salman, the de facto leader of Saudi Arabia. The European delegation walked out. When Mr Infantino eventually ambled on stage, he talked of FIFA "uniting the world".



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 A strict regime in eleven months' time? Thanks! (5)

2 across English perspective is pointless, so gains nothing (5)

3 across The mad, confining virtual world is where we now live (5)

1 down A judge and a boozy captain go after a mighty financial institution (8,5)

Factual clues

1 across A military regime (5)

2 across An adjective meaning English (5)

3 across The third planet in the solar system (5)

1 down The world's biggest bank (8,5)

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.

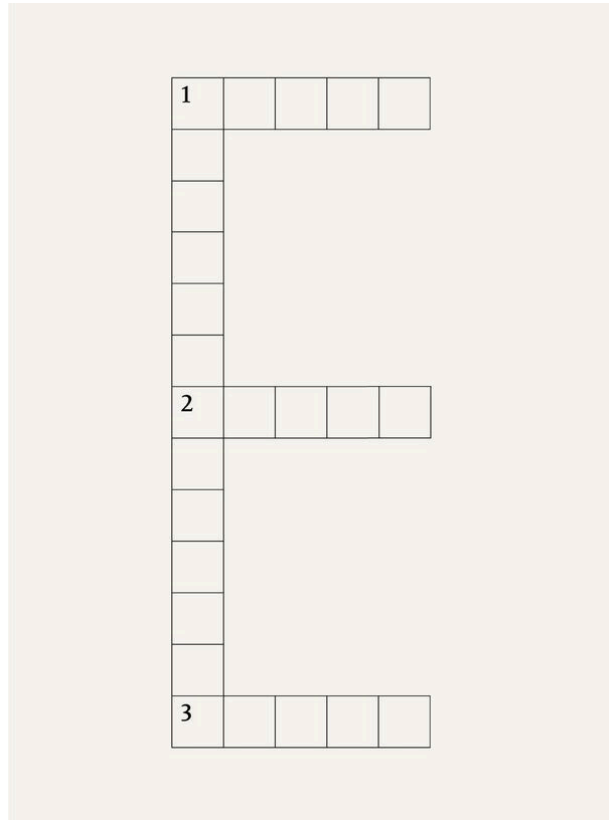


Image: The Economist



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:

John Banes, Baltimore, Maryland, America

Judy Malkin, Toronto, Canada

Melanie Mazier, Luxembourg

They all gave the correct answers of: Sarah Palin, Tracy Chapman, Brian Cox, the Holy Grail and parrots. The theme is the Monty Python comedy group which included Michael Palin and Graham Chapman, performed in the films "Monty Python's Life of Brian" and "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" and are well known for the "dead parrot" sketch.

*Our life is frittered away by
detail. Simplify, simplify, simplify!*

Henry David Thoreau