

# The world in brief

Catch up quickly on the global stories that matter



Photograph: AP

**Xi Jinping**, China's leader, and **Narendra Modi**, his Indian counterpart, described themselves as “partners, not rivals” after meeting ahead of the [Shanghai Co-operation Organisation](#) leaders' summit, which began on Monday in the Chinese city of Tianjin. More than 20 world leaders are attending, including Vladimir Putin, Russia's president. Mr Putin said beforehand that the sco would help shape a “fairer multipolar world order”.

At least 622 people were killed and 1,500 injured when a magnitude 6.0 earthquake struck eastern **Afghanistan**. Three villages were destroyed in Kunar province, with many others significantly damaged, according to the country's health ministry. Access to the region is limited. The disaster will further stretch the country's resources, which have suffered from Western countries' cuts to aid.

**Ukraine** vowed to retaliate with “deep strikes” after **Russian** drones targeted the country's energy infrastructure over the weekend, leaving 30,000 households in the northern region of Chernihiv without power, as well as 29,000 near Odessa, a city in the south. Separately, a suspect was arrested after Andriy Parubiy, a

former speaker of parliament and a prominent figure in Ukraine's pro-EU Maidan revolution of 2014, was shot dead.

**Israel** is reportedly considering annexing parts of the occupied **West Bank** in response to several countries' [plan to recognise](#) a Palestinian state at the UN General Assembly in New York this month. On Friday America's State Department said it would not issue visas for senior Palestinian officials to attend. Meanwhile Israel's defence minister said that the armed forces had killed Abu Obeida, a **Hamas** spokesman.

**Novo Nordisk**, a Danish drugmaker, found its weight-loss drug, Wegovy, cut obese patients' risk of heart attack, stroke and cardiovascular-related death by 57% compared with Zepbound, an alternative made by its American competitor, Eli Lilly. The findings may boost Novo, which in May slashed its [sales forecast](#) for 2025, citing "lower-than-planned" growth in weight-loss drugs. The study was not a randomised controlled trial.

Prabowo Subianto, **Indonesia's** president, said that lawmakers would lose some of their financial perks. Protests against parliamentarians' housing allowances have gripped the country for days, but intensified after a delivery driver was run over by a police vehicle during a student protest. In Jakarta, the capital, protesters looted the home of Indonesia's finance minister.

A report commissioned by **Australia's** government found that software that relies on selfies to verify users' ages was broadly accurate, but that there was a "buffer zone" of two to three years either side for those aged 16. In December Australia will [ban all under-16s](#) from using social media, with many tech firms likely to employ the verification technology.

**Words of the week:** *Wir schaffen das*. German for "we can handle this," the phrase that came to mark Angela Merkel's 16 years as chancellor. [Read the full story.](#)





Photograph: Getty Images

## Europe reacts to Iran's nuclear ambitions

On Thursday Britain, France and Germany notified the UN that Iran was violating its obligations under a 2015 nuclear deal. The move triggers 30 days of negotiations to bring Iran back into compliance. If they fail, UN sanctions, including an arms embargo, will be automatically reimposed on Iran.

Iran has flouted the 2015 agreement for years (so has America, which withdrew in 2018). It has [enriched uranium](#) to 60% purity, far beyond the 3.67% permitted and a short hop from weapons-grade. But the Europeans had been reluctant to invoke the “snapback” provision, fearing it would push Iran to more drastic steps. Iranian lawmakers have drafted a bill that urges their country to leave the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty and end co-operation with the UN's nuclear watchdog. Western powers want Iran to halt its uranium-enrichment programme; Iran is only willing to limit such work, not abandon it. Chances for a new deal look slim.



Photograph: EPA

## Meltdown at the CDC

With flu season approaching the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is facing a leadership crisis. Last week Donald Trump fired Susan Monarez, the director, less than a month into the job. Ms Monarez was reportedly sacked for refusing to back the administration's new policy limiting access to covid-19 boosters. Four other top CDC officials resigned in protest. Jim O'Neill, the deputy to the health secretary, [Robert F. Kennedy junior](#), was named acting director. A permanent successor will require Senate approval.

After months of chaos caused by staffing and funding cuts, the shakeup leaves America's top public-health agency headless even as debates over its policies are fuelling violence. A gunman angry about vaccine mandates recently fired 180 shots at the CDC's Atlanta headquarters, killing a policeman. "It's like getting rid of your generals in the middle of a war," Georges Benjamin, the director of the American Public Health Association, a trade group, told the Associated Press.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Friedrich Merz hopes to cheer Germany up

Standing at nearly two metres, Friedrich Merz is a tall man walking a narrow tightrope. Germany's chancellor took office in May vowing to restore optimism to a country that had fallen into a deep gloom, its economy stagnant and its politics stuck. Less than four months in, that job remains undone.

Mr Merz has made a decent fist of restoring [Germany's voice in Europe](#) and beyond. But at home the bad news rolls relentlessly in. On August 29th unemployment passed 3m. GDP stubbornly refuses to grow. [Politics is hardly any rosier](#): the coalition between Mr Merz's Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats is fraying over tax, welfare and judicial appointments; some in his own party think the chancellor has gone soft. The hard-right Alternative for Germany now tops some polls. Mr Merz will use German television's traditional "summer interview" on Sunday to try to lift the mood. But Germans need more than fine words.



Photograph: Getty Images

## Plushy opportunities for Japan's toymakers

You might expect an ageing society with fewer children to buy fewer toys. Not so Japan. The country's demand for playthings is at a record high. The enthusiasm will be on display at the International Tokyo Toy Show this weekend. Growing numbers of “[kidult](#)” toy lovers have offset a decline in youngsters. “The idea that toys are only used by children for play at home is a preconception of the past,” said Japan's economy ministry in June.

Toymakers that once relied on dolls and [plushies](#) are now seeking new revenue streams. Sanrio, the Japanese “emotional-commerce” firm that owns Hello Kitty, among other brands, is focusing on [licensing intellectual property](#), for example to mobile-gaming firms that drum up excitement by featuring Sanrio characters. Industry executives talk of toys as just one “touchpoint” in a broader ecosystem of games, videos and branded experiences. Yet some toys still offer something no app can: the comfort of a cuddle.





Photograph: AP

## Everest's prices climb higher

Every spring the Nepalese government issues hundreds of permits to would-be [conquerors of Everest](#). But crowds have caused pollution and deadly congestion. For the first time in a decade, Nepal will raise the fee that foreigners pay to climb the 8,849m summit. It will go from \$11,000 to \$15,000 next week.

To redirect climbers to its other peaks, Nepal has waived permit fees on 97 mountains for two years. Mountaineering contributes 4% of Nepal's GDP and could boost the economies of its poorest provinces, though the most remote regions often lack adequate infrastructure, especially for rescue operations.

Expedition organisers say that the fee hike is unlikely to deter wealthy foreign climbers from attempting Everest. Transport, gear and guided support already cost between \$60,000 and \$100,000. Allowing only experienced climbers up could improve safety, but a law to do so has stalled. Until then, better ropework may matter more than regulation.





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* Salesman or wayfarer conceals European destination (6)

*2 across* Delta, alias Romeo, in African port (5)

*3 across* This Welsh novelist is a Scotsman (6)

*1 down* Iron man dared to become national leader (8,4)

### Straight clues

*1 across* Country in the single market but not the EU (6)

*2 across* West African port and capital city (5)

3 across Californian university city (6)

1 down Leader who often lapses into Hindu chauvinism (8,4)

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.

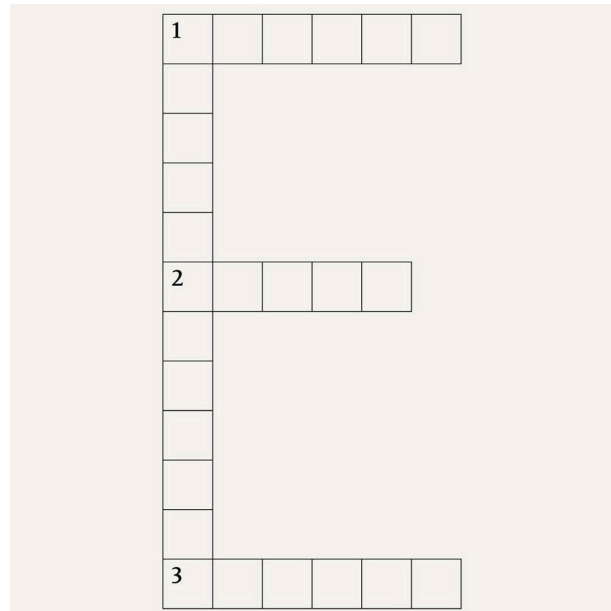


Image: The Economist



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:

**Hana Katsenes and Berthold Schindler**, Munich, Germany

**Alok Mohan**, Dubai, UAE

**Russell Williams**, Basseterre, St. Kitts & Nevis

They all gave the correct answers of: Queen Elizabeth II, workers, Honey, a drone and Bumble. The theme is bees: queen, workers and drones are all categories of bees, some bees produce honey and a bumblebee is a specific species.

The questions were:

**Monday:** In 2008, who pointedly asked “Why did nobody notice it?” when given an explanation about the origins of the global financial crisis at the London School of Economics?

**Tuesday:** What type of people did Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels call upon to “unite” in the Communist Manifesto?

**Wednesday:** Which Bobby Goldsboro song was the best-selling record worldwide in 1968?

**Thursday:** In the US, Amazon allows some users to select what delivery option if the item weighs 5 pounds or less?

**Friday:** Which dating app, in its original form, required women rather than men to make the first contact in opposite-sex pairings?

*“Wherever law ends, tyranny begins.”*

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***John Locke***